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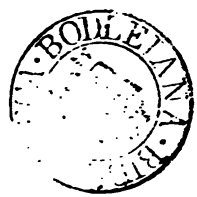

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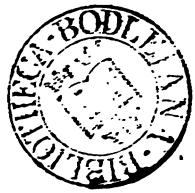

MATRIMONIAL SHIPWRECKS.

CHAPTER I.

"ALL men are alike, my dear Mrs. Bruce—the most inconsiderate, unreasonable creatures on the face of the earth. Now, there was young Lincoln, I certainly thought him an exception to the general rule, and cherished the idea, whenever the absurdity of others came before my eyes in glaring colours, too unmistakable to permit any error on my part; yet, how did he act? Could any thing be more ridiculous? Because, as a girl, I flirted with him, and certainly *did* allow him to believe our affections mutually engaged, he actually fancied me in earnest. Could anything be more purely unsophisticated? I ask you, as my dearest, most intimate friend—as one who has known me since girlhood."

"I really never exactly knew the circumstances of the case," was the rejoinder.

"The facts are these," continued the first speaker. "As you are aware, I was brought up entirely in the country; and except the county race-balls, or occasional ones at home or at friends' houses, I knew little of gaiety. What *could* a girl do in such a case? No mother, sisters, or brothers; no one but a good country squire of a father! Why, fall in love, to be sure, and so I fancied myself for a whole year with Lieutenant Lincoln of the 78th, who was quartered near the old manor-house. There was no one else to flirt with, and then he danced exquisitely! I *never* shall forget how he waltzed! It was scarcely human, so beautiful! They had none of those horrible

deux temps then; no, it was really in time to the music; and he whirled you and himself round until your head became completely lost, and all you were capable of discerning was the unceasing glare of his red coat (he always came in uniform to a ball): it certainly *was* delicious!" Here the speaker paused, sighing over the memory of one of her youthful days.

"But your love affair, my dear?" questioned the impatient listener.

"Ah! true." Here the bosom gave one last expiring gasp, and the lady continued—"Of course, between the pauses of the waltz we conversed; we often, too, went out riding; he somehow was always hovering about our neighbourhood. Then, my father being very hospitable, called on the regiment, which was quartered in the town, and eventually Lincoln became a constant visitor at our house; but he was very poor then, and it was absurd on his part to suppose that I meant anything by our innocent flirtation—quite absurd!"

"I heard," said Mrs. Bruce, "that a positive engagement had existed between you; I don't exactly remember who told me: Mr. Elton was my informer, I think."

"Oh, Mr. Elton!" responded the other, with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, and yet she blushed slightly. "Mr. Elton always runs away with some strange idea; he is far too literal for everyday life. 'Tis true, a boy and girl species of engagement was laughingly entered into on my part; I couldn't seriously intend such a thing in his position. He swore he never would love or marry another, and I said something of the same sort, but only in fun, and this continued a year, then he was ordered away; and, just to tranquillize him, I promised to be true and faithful, but only in *badinage;* and this is what I think so *very* unreasonable on his part. When I married poor Adair, three months afterwards, Lincoln called me perjured, false—all that was wicked. I assure you his letter made me quite ill for a whole week, for he so cruelly attacked my motives in choosing Adair; because he happened to be wealthy, and some twenty years my senior, he called me

interested, 'bartered for gold!'—I scarcely know what, and every one knows I am the most uncalculating woman in the world; but my father approved of Adair, who was an intimate friend of his, and I hope I knew my duty too well to my dear departed parent to contradict his wishes."

"And what, then, became of Lincoln? All this is new to me, beyond the few words Mr. Elton spoke," inquired Mrs. Bruce.

"After writing me that dreadful letter, he exchanged into an Indian regiment, and sailed for Calcutta. Poor fellow! with all his faults I really believe he loved me, and felt my marriage with another keenly, but it was very foolish his doing so." Here a sigh again closed her speech.

At that moment the door opened, and gave admittance to a man of about sixty years of age; the hair, of almost silvery whiteness, added a nobility of expression to a fine, open, but most scrutinizing countenance; his eyes were dark hazel, with dark eyelashes, and the brows above them still retained their earlier colouring, and were black and strongly marked; in figure he was scarcely middle height, with an unsettled bustling air, which, to a nervous person, was anything but tranquillizing: the man, the eyes, and the thoughts seemed never at rest.

Mrs. Adair's countenance, though not one of the most expressive in the world, plainly indicated excessive annoyance when she beheld her visitor; though this he could scarcely be termed by his manner, for he evidently came like one privileged to enter at all times unannounced, as by some right or courtesy. He cast a hasty glance round the room, not *quite* looking at the ladies, and yet they felt his eye was upon them; his glance was like that of a good portrait, which seems to every one to be looking especially on him or her. Had any individual sat in the remotest corner of that drawing-room he would have been quite conscientiously prepared to swear that Mr. Elton *exclusively* stared at him, and yet he looked equally at all, saw all, judged all, and the impression his advent made

on all; thus he at once perceived Mrs. Adair's annoyance, and after saluting both ladies with his own peculiar nod and "how d'ye do!" he added, fixing his keen eyes on that lady's, "I have disturbed you, eh? sure to drop in inopportunely, am I not?—but never mind me, you know I love ladies' talk; pray, continue your conversation; you were saying——"

"I really scarcely know," uttered Mrs. Adair, evidently avoiding the solicited continuation.

"We were speaking of *crochet*," replied woman's ready filling up of an awkward position; Mrs. Bruce was the speaker.

"Pardon me," answered Mr. Elton, dropping into a seat, "that was possibly a previous subject; the last, I think, related in some way to Indian affairs: am I not correct?"

"Really, Mr. Elton," said Mrs. Adair, drawing herself up in offended dignity, "I must say it is exceedingly ungentlemanly——." She arrived no further in her speech.

"Listening at the door," you would say, he replied quietly; "and I, quite agreeing with you about the rudeness of the act, must correct you. I am not guilty of it—cleanse me of that foul stain; I read your hastily silenced conversation on your face; so again I beg of you, don't mind me, continue it, and I will listen also with attention and pleasure."

There was, however, an awkward pause. Mrs. Bruce as a guest could not very well take up the broken thread of their discourse, and knot it again unsanctioned by the hostess, who sat in perfect silence, half of indignation, half of unwillingness to continue the topic before Mr. Elton. This same Mr. Elton was a formidable personage in her sight. Left early a widow by her accommodating husband, who, seeing no possible chance of making her happy during his lifetime, died, to possibly meet her dearest wishes. One thing is certain, she did not regret him deeply; but whether she was of a disposition ever to be happy or content in any state, is another question.

Mr. Adair left her two pledges of their mutual uncomfortableness, a daughter (for she took the precedence by age) and a son, Angelina (this name was her mother's choice) and Richard—

horrid "Dick," as he was generally called, in compliment to his godfather, Dick Elton, Mr. Adair's oldest and dearest friend; and, to the dreadful discomfort of his widow, we may be permitted to suspect the only real weeper adorning her widowed dress, this man was not only left as sole executor to his will, but joint guardian to the children.

We will allow Mr. Elton's own character to depict itself in the course of this tale, and merely state that, though this position gave him a certain control and right in the household of Mrs. Adair, it was like a path of sweet scattered rose-leaves before a bridal train, where Cupid, in envious act at the loss of two votaries, slips the thorns underneath for Hymen to discover, returning a conqueror over the flowers already faded. Fortunately for Mr. Elton, he rather liked thorns, and at once saw what he had to overcome. Rose-leaves puzzled him; he had been brought up in a harsh school of life, and too generally perhaps feared the rose might conceal a scorpion's sting. He was a man of vast mind, and right judging in most things: he felt in how unpleasant a position his dear friend Adair had placed him; nevertheless he was resolved to do his duty, but at the same time interfere as little as possible with the children, unless called upon to do so.

For a few years after Mr. Adair's death all went on admirably. Angelina was twelve years of age, Richard eight. She had a governess under her mother's eye, he a tutor. This did not exactly please Elton; he would rather have sent Richard to a good public school, but the mother pleaded that his health was not the very best, and so Elton gave in. A severe accident which happened to himself some short time afterwards, obliged him to visit Madeira for his own health; and constantly hearing the very best accounts from Mrs. Adair about the well-doing of the children, with much anxiety about his perfect restoration to convalescence, he was induced to remain abroad five years.

When he returned to the Grange, the widow's estate in Warwickshire, it was to find the most complete alteration in all things. Mrs. Adair was very inventive in the manner of

educating youth, fond of novelty and fresh schemes every day. There never had existed two such children as hers, and they should be models of perfection in all things. *This* was a fixed idea, her only one of the kind. How she blessed the temporary absence of that "most provoking, interfering man, Mr. Elton, and what a shame Adair should have given him so much power!"

This she said a hundred times at least to Mrs. Bruce, her best friend; and when he was gone to Madeira, she set skilfully to work at home, after her own fashion.

Her first act was to dismiss Richard's tutor, and place him under the care of Angelina's governess, a woman of an iron frame of mind, through whose system all the classics were spread like the intersected railroads through this happy land. All tongues, dead and living, were hers; and her own natural one was in no wise tardy in setting forth her knowledge to the world. The only needle she admitted the acquaintance of was the polar one; all others were ridiculously feminine for her. It more than once entered into Richard Adair's head, when under her care and teaching, to question whether she might not, by possibility, be the pole itself, disguised under the form of the very coldest, stiffest woman ever created.

Under her care, he learned nothing, except almost to hate every thing feminine for her sake, and most certainly all tongues, except the good vernacular, in which he energetically wished at night—"That old Ovid's ghost would metamorphose her into something hideous before morning, and carry her off; or give himself the excuse of ignorance for baiting her to death with his trusty mastiff!" But morning came, and with it Miss Caffir and her books on the one hand, and sister Angelina, her pet, on the other. *Her* pet will speak whole volumes for Angelina—she was worthy of that distinction: consequently, what with the Kaffir's (as he called her) teaching and scolding, and Angelina's abetting, tale-bearing, and overbearingness, on the ground of priority of age, poor Richard became, not broken-spirited, but worse—obstinate and rebellious. Mrs. Adair saw

this would not do; she took a night to consider of it, a day to consult Mrs. Bruce, and then Miss Caffir's salary was paid, herself dethroned, and another grievous error committed. She engaged a tutor for both her children. She had a strong idea that, by bringing them up under the same person, with the same studies, they would become loving as babes in the wood, or a second edition of Castor and Pollux.

Mr. Bateman, the tutor, arrived. Richard was then ten years of age; two had slipped away under the Kaffir's care; the boy had grown very shrewd—a physiognomist too: he stared at Bateman a full inquiring glance, and forthwith liked him. We will pass over the succeeding three years, at the expiration of which Mr. Elton returned, perfectly renovated in health, and expecting to find both his wards prodigies. Angelina was a harsh, cold, pedantic *man*—in all but the garb; Richard was about as ignorant of classics, mathematics, or any other manly *bookishness* as he well could be; but he knew all the best points in a horse—could hunt, shoot, course, and any thing else which a full-grown sporting character might be expected to do.

This discovery burst with fearful intensity on his mother's heart. For a year before, as his health appeared delicate, the family physician ordered him not to remain in town. Angelina, on the other hand, was under medical care in London. The brother and sister never could agree in any thing; so he was left at the Grange with Mr. Bateman, and Angelina and her mother repaired to town. She (the girl) was forbidden all study; Richard, on the contrary, was ordered to "read hard," so Bateman said, to overtake his sister. If hard riding would have done it, Richard had won the day, for no sooner were tutor and pupil alone than away flew the boy's books; the man tried to reason *a little*, but the youth had the upper hand long before, and quiet, easy Bateman put by the classics, and with a spur to his heel, started off across country in a view hallo with his pupil, just to keep him out of harm, and brace up his failing strength with fresh air and genial exercise.

CHAPTER II.

In the midst of these merry doings, Elton dropped in to take an unexpected cup of tea with Mrs. Adair, in Eaton Square.

"If," he exclaimed, after examining Angelina on various learned subjects, "my godson, Dick Adair, be as clever a scholar as you are, Angelina, he will become one of the lights of the age!"

But Dick never would be, at his foretelling, a Bude, shining almost over space infinite. Nature had been kindly disposed the day she created Dick Adair; what he might become, apart from her care, would be the forming of his mother, the Kaffir, and Mr. Bateman.

When Mr. Elton was first presented, after five years' absence, to Angelina, his heart involuntarily shrank back, snail-like, within its cell, from all collision. When he saw his godson, and the full, dark, daring, yet unvicious eye met his, out went Elton's hand, and the heart with it, to meet the boy's glad welcome. Richard remembered him as his father's friend; he never thought of a possibly severe guardian, mentor, or tormentor; he was the first and last who had ever said to him,—

"Resemble your father, my boy, and you will be a good man!"

He did not exactly know how to set about it, so, uninstructed, he went his own way, over hedge and ditch, at the heel of the hunt; or, boy as he was, not unfrequently in at the death, to the glory of the oldest hands in the county, who delighted to call him his father's son, and this was enough for Dick.

When Mr. Elton had quitted England, it was with a heart in perfect security regarding the prospects of young Adair. He had placed him under the care of a scholar and a gentleman; if his mother had been pleased to leave him thus, all would have been well; as it was, the natural goodness of the

boy had alone preserved him from evil, worse far than what he had fallen into; for Miss Caffir, who was a time-server, a quick observer to choose the wiser part, had seen at a glance that to make friends with Angelina was the sure thing: accordingly, the precious pair between them nearly choked up the good seed in Richard by the vile weeds of Hypocrisy, and her sisters, Slander and Malevolence. Fortunately, these were false goddesses before whom he never could bend a knee; he laughed them to scorn; but such company left its trace, and the boy became suspicious of all his so-called superiors, and reckless of their good or ill opinion.

Then came Bateman, the last person in the world to have followed on so many errors; he could not but trip at every step. His pupil liked him at a first glance, and commenced by *patronizing*, where the other should have taken the reins; and so insensibly was this done, that Bateman never perceived that when the young man *would* study, it was a condescension on his part, or the desire of improvement, natural to a refined mind feeling its ignorance, and blushing for the talents lying dormant. Bateman was a man of education, sound and good; but a person so totally unfitted for the guidance of any youth, that it was a miracle his pupil ever learned anything. He himself had sought study for the pure love of it, and he deemed all must do the same.

In Angelina he possessed a gem in this respect; she was resolved to outshine all her own sex, and the other too, especially Richard, whom she hated with a most unsisterly hate. Miss Caffir commenced her classical education for her, Bateman completed it; and when Mr. Elton returned, he found the girl of seventeen a walking museum of knowledge, stuffed and artificially alive as the ornithological specimens therein, mouldy and difficult to decipher as many of its old manuscripts. Dick he found at the Grange in an old-fashioned red coat of his father's following the hounds, and Bateman on a strong cob in sober black, spectacles on nose, following him.

To be brief, the tutor was given his *congé*, but in all courtesy,

and his pupil sent to a good public school; here he remained three years, and then he went on his travels (this was by Mrs. Adair's desire to "finish him") under the charge of another tutor. Verily he had read enough to satisfy any one; but, like "too many cooks," they would have marred all, if nature had not stepped in. At twenty he returned home; the mother's delight knew no bounds—her son was all perfection. If he would go to the bar, he *must* be chancellor in time; general in the army, and F.M., K.C.B., and all the other alphabetical abbreviations of honour besides, floated before her eyes,—prime minister, any thing in short. But, strange perversity of early love, Richard Adair was at heart a jockey—the Turf his home, and Tattersall's the arena where all his powers were called forth to light; and, revelling in these delights, his heart turned towards the one who had first permitted his young wing to take this flight,—Bateman, who now resided near London, and prepared private pupils for college, or any thing they might fancy better.

The first leisure moment he found after his return was devoted to a visit to this abode of rural castigation, and "reading with," as people term it; and great was the pleasure felt by the master when his old pupil cordially assured him that none other had ever succeeded him in his regards, though adverse fate had driven them different roads. It must be very pleasant for the hand which has flogged, or probably *ought* to have done so, to be grasped in friendship by the sufferer; 'tis a kissing the rod, particularly and practically humble; and humility in this age of overbearing pride is an immense virtue.

Certainly young Adair had no pride either in his birth (the county man's heirloom) or in himself, handsome as he assuredly was; he was tall, some six feet, well made, well and firmly knit, though slight, good hands, finely and manfully shaped, handsome feet, and a head, nobly set on the shoulders, ornamented by rich, thickly, curling dark chesnut hair, a finely chiselled nose, pale, square, clever brow, arched brows, large roving chesnut eyes, of the perfect colour of the nut, shining

and polished, just emancipated from its rough outside shell, before the air has tarnished its fresh rich brownness; dark lashes shaded these, through which the flashing glance shot diamond stars, all laughter or feeling. Certainly he must have known he was good-looking, but he did not seem to know or care; he never thought about it.

He was a child of nature in all that was good or handsome in him; the rest was of the world—of the earth, earthy, attributable to the many errors of his education; he was not what is termed "slang," not a whit of it, perfectly easy, and perfectly assured that the only happiness in this world was to be met with in close connection with hounds and horses, so he sought their society and those associated with them, but he assumed no particular phraseology or dress; he could speak of a horse, hunt, or race, without technicalities to puzzle the uninitiated, or oaths or jockeyisms, and he could spend half the day in the company of his horses or grooms without cutting off the corners of his coat, sticking a hat with perfectly strait rims on the top of his head, or wearing a waistcoat below where never waist was ever seen—that is, nearly to his knees! All he did was from natural taste, so he hung out no banner to proclaim that his heart was in both kennel and stable.

Now we will return to Mrs. Adair's drawing-room in Eaton Square, where after a painful silence of some moments, that lady thus replied to Mr. Elton's question as to their subject of conversation,—

"Well, 'tis true, Elton, we were talking about this most unpleasant charge which has been so unexpectedly and unceremoniously cast upon me—this guardianship to a girl I never even knew the existence of until called upon to accept her as my ward, it is truly painful." Here she paused and assumed a look of the most perfect misery, glancing from one to the other for sympathy. It was, however, very evident that from Mr. Elton she had small chance of any, for he answered hastily,—

"'Tis optional with yourself, as you know, to relinquish it;

send the girl to the only person who should take charge of her, her aunt."

"I could not conscientiously do it, Elton," replied Mrs. Adair, pursing up her mouth and shaking her head mysteriously; "I feel this as a last solemn duty imposed upon me by one in the grave, whom I have ——" She hesitated.

"Injured," he concluded bluntly, "that's what you thought, but don't allow that idea to haunt your susceptible mind, my dear madam" (there was sarcasm in every intonation of his voice); "believe me, Lincoln quite forgave your jilting him, and his marriage was the proof of it, and with a most amiable woman, with whom he was perfectly happy for years."

"He couldn't be—he couldn't be!" almost shrieked Mrs. Adair in her energy, "for was she not an Indian?"

"Do you mean to say a black woman?" inquired the hitherto silently attentive Mrs. Bruce. "How very horrible!"

"Pooh, nonsense!" answered Mr. Elton, "colour is nothing; the devil, you know, is never as black as he is painted. Mrs. Lincoln was, I hear, an exceedingly handsome half-caste Creole — whatever you please; nevertheless the daughter may be black, I grant you."

"I am quite in the dark," said Mrs. Bruce, advancing her chair nearer, as if to facilitate the action of the telegraphic wires on her aural faculties—all electricity, and prepared for any shock."

"Ay, 'tis a *black* business!" laughed Mr. Elton.

"Don't laugh," said Mrs. Adair, sentimentally sighing; "I am sure I am a persecuted and most wretched creature."

"All your own fault! You can cast off the charge if you please; but then you know you lose £300 a year, and the rich presents accompanying Mariam Lincoln!"

"What a painful thing it must have been for that poor creature whom Lincoln so rashly married," softly sighed Mrs. Adair again, with a look of girlish consciousness, "to have been obliged to submit, as of course she was, to his calling her daughter 'Mariam;' he could not decently have named her

exactly like me, 'Maria.' Poor Mrs. Lincoln! for of course she knew of his fatal attachment; doubtless it shortened her days!"

"On my life!" exclaimed Mr. Elton, hastily rising, and then as quickly reseating himself; "you ladies would drive a quiet matter-of-fact man, like myself, mad with your sentiment. Pardon me, I am very blunt, but 'tis time, for the sake of this unhappy girl who is coming, to set things right. First of all, my dear madam, disabuse yourself—Mariam is a very common Oriental name, as common as our Mary, and answers to it; Mrs. Lincoln's name was Mariam."

"This is unbearable, really, Mr. Elton!" answered Mrs. Adair, colouring indignantly as he wrested all sentiment from the hold she seemed resolved to keep upon it. "I have his letter—poor Lincoln's *last!*—containing his final wishes, and a lock of his hair."

"That's not worth much," muttered Elton. "It was not particularly handsome alive; how does it look dead?"

Mrs. Adair continued, not appearing to have noticed the interruption—"In which he bids me love his Mariam, and remember, as I do so, that in thus naming her, *he* thought of Maria!"

"Lincoln was a——"

What he was in Mr. Elton's imagination was cut off from publicity, by the opening of the door, and entrance of Richard Adair, spur on heel, and whip in hand.

"What are you all disputing about?" he asked, after saluting Mrs. Bruce and Mr. Elton. "I'll bet my life you're on the old subject, the advent of Blackey."

"Gracious goodness, Richard!" cried his mother; "don't add to my bitterness by giving the girl such a name—it strikes me with horror. If she should be black, how can I ever *chaperon* her?"

"Depend upon it, she is," answered he, carelessly.

"Will no one explain this to me?" implored Mrs. Bruce, in pitiful agony.

"Briefly thus," answered Mr. Elton. "This mad Lincoln,

after more than twenty years' lucidity, winds up existence by an act of huge madness. He has an only daughter, a girl of fifteen, and, instead of sending her to his own sister, he confides her to the care of almost a stranger, Mrs. Adair, whom he has neither met nor corresponded with for that whole period. If she accept the guardianship, with it go £300 a year for life, and enough shawls, &c., to make an empress jealous; if she refuse, the girl, £300, shawls, and responsibility, go to his own sister, a most excellent person, Mrs. Wilton of Russell Square. Now, if a man must not have been mad to hesitate between the two —I speak in candour, meaning no offence to any one—I'll call upon every sensible person to judge."

"Send her to her aunt, mother," urged Richard, carelessly humming; "whatever her colour, don't let Angelina have the pleasant task of baiting her, as she does every one."

"Oh, Mr. Adair!" exclaimed Mrs. Bruce, "how can you speak thus of your sister! I'm sure she's an angel!"

"I never found that out," laughed he. "And 'tis strange too, for they say—extremes meet; this *angel* has never crossed my demoniacal path in that garb!"

During this short dialogue, his mother and Mr. Elton were disputing apart about this subject of contention. Evidently he was much interested in endeavouring to induce her to relinquish the imposed trust, but in vain; she *would* be a victim, or she coveted the £300 a year, and the before-named presents, coming over with Mariam Lincoln and her ayah from Calcutta. Elton knew the influence Richard had with his mother, so he gave him a sidelong, significant look, which the other seemed fully to understand; for, throwing himself back in his easy-chair, he said carelessly, lest the thing might seem premeditated,—

"I'm sure I wish, mother, you would make up your mind not to let this Hindoo, Parsee, Mahratta, or whatever she may be, come here, for I foresee all sorts of annoyances arising like distant spectres. She will be no Christian, depend upon it—girls always lean to their mother's way of thinking; she will come

over accompanied by cages of hideous reptiles and monkeys, objects of her impious adoration, or else a Bramah bull, which she will expect you to have tame about the house like a lapdog."

"How very ridiculously you talk, Richard," said his mother, fidgeting on her chair; "the girl *must* be a Christian; Lincoln always went scrupulously to church."

"But how do you know what his wife made him do?"

"What a very disagreeable position you *are* placed in, my dearest friend!" exclaimed Mrs. Bruce.

"If it were *only* a Bramah bull," said Elton, taking up the thread of the discourse, "that might easily be arranged, by sending the animal into your park at the Grange. But, jesting apart, I see no end to all the annoyances which may arise to your discomfort; but let me advise you to send her to Mrs. Wilton's."

"Annoyances!" chimed in Richard; "nuisances of all sorts, which, as a woman of just feeling, you will have to bear."

"What can you mean?" asked she, in evident trepidation.

"Well, I mean you cannot forbid the girl seeing her relations; it would be most unjust to do so. Some day or other she will be claimed as niece, or something of the sort, by those men who go about town beating a tom-tom, whilst they writhe their bodies in what they call dancing, like a boa in ecstacy or a fit, dressed, by way of costume, in very dirty white overalls, extremely short and equally-soiled petticoats, and red jackets, and caps; and these men you will probably find some day sitting on your rose-coloured ottoman, interlacing *your* ward and *their* niece in extremely dirty arms, expressing their satisfaction at the *rencontre* by some melodious strain in Hindustanee, or varying their joy by a characteristic dance, *au* tom-tom, on your velvet carpet."

"How dreadfully disagreeable!" again exclaimed the monotonous Mrs. Bruce.

"Nonsense!" cried Mrs. Adair, impatiently. "Nothing of the kind *can* occur, I will answer for it."

"Then you'll be an unnatural wretch," said Richard; "and she will curse you by her gods, which means the putting a pet cobra-capella or an over-fed toad in your bed!"

Here Mrs. Adair drew forth an often-perused letter from her pocket, and once again lingered over its pages. It spoke of presents which he, Lincoln, had fondly, even yet, chosen for her—shawls, which native princes had envied; diamonds, which he never should live to behold glittering on her still fair bosom! —it was *all* sentiment. Mrs. Adair glanced in an opposite glass; she was fair, forty-five, still fair!—the diamonds clenched the affair; and when Mrs. Bruce had quitted, to seek her "disagreeable husband," as she obligingly called him, "in Kensington Gardens, by connubial appointment," Mrs. Adair positively and peremptorily declared to Elton and Richard, "that she *would* judge for herself, and Mariam Lincoln *should* come as her ward!"

CHAPTER III.

"WHY don't you wish my mother to have this girl as her ward?" asked Richard of Elton, as they quitted the house together.

"Because, somehow I pity this child, even without knowing her. Between ourselves, Richard (I mean not the slightest affront to your mother, who is an excellent woman at heart), Mrs. Adair is the very last person to whose care I would confide the education of youth, male or female. A pretty mess she has made of Angelina, who is the most incongruous being in existence; without the vigour or energy of man, yet professing thoroughly to despise the rougher sex, and ignorant of every gentler quality which makes a woman so charming."

"On my life—to use Mrs. Bruce's favouritism—I think my beloved sister the most disagreeable girl I ever met."

"And 'tis to the care of your mother, whose foolish system of education has formed such a one, that this idiot Lincoln sends his orphan daughter!"

"We shall have some funny scenes," said Richard, lashing an imaginary hound with his whip. "What could have induced this lunatic to act so?"

"Simply this. There is a set of persons created who start in life with one solitary idea or point of character; they begin with, and end with it. The rest of their lives is an interregnum of nothing, dragging life up a hill and pushing it down again, and, when they arrive at the bottom, they pick up their first idea, and hug it unto death!"

"What was Lincoln's?" laughed Richard.

"Sentiment. I knew the fellow well; he was a tall, spare youth, stiff and ungainly in his movements, a sort of man who seems to look uncomfortably at you over his ears, his neck is so stocked up—no-coloured hair, not red, but looking like a flaxen wig sunburnt from hanging too long neglected on a barber's block in the sun. With all his care—for he studied appearance much, being in love—he never could do more than coax it to lie still and perfectly straight; his complexion matched it to a shade, with a long melancholy nose, sleepy-looking eyes, with just as much life in them as a sheep might have which had gone to rest in Smithfield, and been suddenly awakened from a dream of green fields and clover. He was predestined to a fruitless passion. He was in country quarters, and, of course, fell in love with the handsomest girl in the neighbourhood—your mother. I will not pretend to say which of them was most to blame—he, for believing in any woman's faith who only loved him for his red coat; or your mother, for vowing to be constant, without the slightest intention of being so in more than a promised waltz or quadrille. The only certainty is, that she married as good a man as ever breathed, your father; and Lincoln went to India, 'to die,' as he said, 'of a broken heart;' but in such cases men frequently mistake the 'off side'

for the 'near,' as you would technically call it, and die of mulligatawny, curry, and liver."

"Pardon me," answered Richard, "I never use technicalities, so don't malign my better taste. If I said 'off' or 'near,' it would be that they are the only terms in use for expressing left and right in driving."

"Corrected, my boy," replied his companion; "I own that, for one so devoted to horse-flesh, hounds, and the like, you are wonderfully humanized. It is bad enough giving these all your time and thoughts, without bringing the stable in at every word."

"Leave my taste in quiet," responded Richard, "and conclude about this mad Lincoln. Having been absent since the first intimation reached my mother of his last wishes, I am quite in the dark for the most part."

"Briefly, then, he disappeared, not to die in a few short days, as he predicted, but to live upwards of twenty years; and now comes the proof of my theory, that a man begins and ends with the same idea—the rest an interregnum. Lincoln married, about three years after going out, some handsome Creole, with whom, as I have been informed by a brother officer, he lived perfectly happy for fifteen years; she has been dead about four. As soon as she was gone, Lincoln gave himself up to unmitigated grief, until he recovered the lost clue of his first idea, and fell back upon sentiment; and this stupid man winds up as he began, by playing the fool, and imposing on himself and your mother as a broken-hearted man. To do this, he sends her a pathetic letter, a lock of his hair (I'd give my eyes to see it), and his poor orphan child; instead of playing the part of a sensible man, and sending her to his exemplary sister,—no, he must die in all the odour of a hopeless and romantic love, and send her to your mother."

"On my soul, Elton, I pity the girl," cried Richard warmly.

"So do I; but what can be done? All women have their foibles, and the most rocky one is, the ardent desire of inspiring a hopeless, endless passion. The very best creature that ever

wore petticoats has this vein of ferocity in her nature—that she would rejoice in knowing a man's days shortened for love of her, always supposing it not to be by a bullet. And some go the utmost limits of inhumanity, and in their morbid desire for this suicidal food exclaim, 'swords or pistols!' little caring how, so 'tis done for the honour of the thing; and then they sigh, and very quietly lay the unction to their souls that it was no fault of theirs!"

"But my mother is too reasonable not to be persuaded, if seriously undertaken."

"Try it, and you'll find that for all the world she will not forego the pleasure of being a victim to remorse, for having been instrumental in shortening the days of a man who lived twenty-five years, nearly twenty of them in matrimonial bliss, after she broke his heart, by giving her hand to another; and, after all, perhaps, it will be better to leave her in the indulgence of this idea—it may make the poor girl's fate happier. Take it away, or undermine it, and poor Mariam will be handed over to some pedagogue (for she seems still to cling to this hands-across teaching male and female) and the gentle care of Angelina."

"Confound Angelina!" heartily exclaimed Richard; "I wish she would marry."

"Be human, my boy, and desire a better fate to one of us, in brotherly love, than ever to call Angelina, though your sister, wife."

"Well, all I can say is, that if she and the Kaffir, her unfading friend, take this poor child in hand, swarth though she may be, I pity, and will protect her."

"I daresay she's a good-looking girl; her mother was handsome, I hear, though brown, to speak moderately. I'll make one more effort with your mother quietly, and if I fail, well, then, things must take their course."

Here their roads separated, and the two parted cordially.

"I like that boy," soliloquized Elton, as he moved away; "there is something noble in him; he always reminds me of

his father. If that silly mother of his had left him under the care of the man I chose for him, and then afterwards sent him to Eton, he would now be an ornament to anything he might follow for pleasure or profit. As it is, I fear to curb hastily; but it grieves me to see energies like his cast on a horse's speed, or the coursing of a greyhound—these things lead so swiftly to other follies; but a strict hand mars Dick—a kind one, judiciously advanced, may make him. I must try and find such a one;" and he walked homewards.

As for Dick, as he termed him, he was quite capable of finding hands for himself; whether he always selected judiciously, time will prove.

When he quitted Elton, he sauntered quietly off towards his stables, and mounting his favourite horse, turned its head towards Highgate.

There was a quiet-looking half cottage half house near a certain lane in this locality, and before this mechanically stopped Richard's horse. No servant accompanied him—no boy in buttons rushed out to take his steed; so he dismounted, and passing the bridle through a ring in the wall, rang the bell. There was a brass plate on the door, and on it you read—"Mr. Bateman, Classical and Mathematical Tutor."

A servant answered the door, looking very much as if some mathematical instrument was sadly required to make her mind encompass the thought that cleanliness is beautiful in woman. She replied to Richard's question by saying—"Yes, they was in;" leaving him to discover whether she actually meant they had been and were gone out, or, with ungrammatical want of justice, flinging the burden of the present on the past.

Richard resolved to elucidate the mystery himself; possibly he was well acquainted with the privileges of her mode of speech, for he brushed past her, and rapping at a parlour door looking into a garden at the back of the house, said—

"May I come in?"

At the same time, turning the lock and entering, he found himself in a very neat little sitting-room, one window of which

looked into the garden. On the sill were some flowers in pots, veiling by their height the limited size of the ground beyond and bidding the room, that wintry day, look cheerful and glad. On a table in the centre were books, mathematical instruments, and all the paraphernalia of a tutor, now absent; and at another smaller table, placed close to the window, sat a fair-haired girl of about eighteen, busily engaged sketching. As he entered, she sprang up hastily and joyfully to meet him.

"Hallo, Kate, always at work!" and "Oh, Richard, how glad I am to see you!" burst simultaneously from both, as he clasped her proffered hand warmly.

This was another of Mrs. Adair's educational errors. She had been delighted to hear Bateman had an only child, whose mother had died in giving her birth, for this girl could accompany her father to the Grange, the year Richard was left there under his charge; she was only two years his junior, and would make an excellent companion for him; besides, it carried out her plan of ideas as regarded early companionship with the opposite sex, to fortify a woman and refine a man.

Really one would have imagined that Nature, finding herself greatly at fault, had delegated Mrs. Adair with the heavy charge of amending her errors or omissions. Accordingly, Richard and Kate Bateman had passed a year together in perfect liberty. He had looked upon her as a sister then; and it was not until he returned after his travelling on the Continent, that he remembered the pretty girl, who blushed when he embraced her on their reunion, was in point of fact nothing to him. The thought was not at all displeasing, she being far too pretty for a mere sister.

Bateman was the very dullest man in the world in the world's ways; with a head full of schemes, to which his toil as a tutor was the stepping-stone, by the means it afforded him of carrying out his brain's bubbles, how could he think of any thing so purely matter of fact as his daughter's danger from too unreserved an intimacy with a man like young Adair? On the contrary, he threw them together, not from the slightest

thought of possible good to her future prospects arising out o it, but because it was so natural they should like one another.

He liked Richard, so of course she must; and Richard, h felt assured, liked both of them, and so on they could all jo as far as their roads lay together, and then shake hands an part, perhaps for ever, at the finger-post directing thei separate routes; but he overlooked the possible result, tha the bodies might part, and one or both hearts go breaking o its life's journey, or else in open rebellion dare its fellow t leave it, and dash recklessly down the road called ruin Bateman saw nothing of this; he never for one instan dreamed that Richard's visits would have been less frequen had Kate been absent. No, he held him up as a model to al his rebellious pupils as the one whose friendship survive castigations and all other obligations from his tutor, though goodness knows, little of the former had Richard ever receive from him.

"And what are you doing now, Kate?" he said, seatin himself in the chair, and looking at her drawing, while sh leaned over his shoulder, on which rested one little white han in perfect confidence, and the freedom of an innocent mind.

"Don't you think I have much improved, dear Richard? asked she.

"Very much—that is, as far as I am competent to be a judge that's just like the old oak at the Grange we used to sit unde when I felt tired, and you used to read me to sleep after day's sport—cub-hunting—in early autumn. I fancy I see i now; and, when I woke up I always found your handkerchie over my eyes to shade them, and your arm under my head dear little Kate!"

Here the handsome man looked up with his deep loving eye in the face of the pretty girl hanging over him, and the tw little hands, in perfect innocence of thought, clasped round hi neck. "Dear Kate," he said again, and his arm stole roun her waist, as a brother might clasp a sister; with the other h

commenced turning over the portfolio of drawings. Kate had one long curl at either side of her fair temple, and this curl touched Richard's cheek as she stooped over him; once or twice he brushed it away, but it returned as quickly again to be driven back. We speak of this, to show how little either then thought of the passion possibly dormant in their hearts; for he chid away that which a lover would have pressed to an ardent lip.

"Oh, Kate!" he said, at last, almost impatiently, "put back your hair—it fidgets me; there," he cried, as he himself turned the offending ringlet over her ear, "that's better, and I'm sure you look much prettier with it so."

"Do I?—then I'll always wear it thus to please you; arrange the other side, Richard;" and the girl knelt down on an ottoman at his feet, holding up her baby face for his hand to adorn it.

She did so at first calmly, as if she were fifty, not eighteen. But we cannot go beyond a certain point with impunity. And these baby faces are very dangerous things; they merge the child in the woman, as in a lulling sleep, and when we may have ventured far beyond child's play, an awaking moment comes, and the sad woman's face alone remains, shaded by her sorrows, perhaps guilt! As he obeyed her, he looked on this sweet face smiling upon him, and then he noticed the fine little ear, now fully disclosed; then the red parted lips, showing the white teeth, from the position of the neck thrown back; and, seeing this, Richard leaned down, and, taking the head in both hands, gave her a warm, affectionate embrace, from which she shrank; and struggling to her feet, stood before him blushing deeply, and now there was no curl on the cheek to hide it.

He laughed, and coloured too, and then seizing both her hands, asked her "Why she blushed?" Kate did not reply, but the blush deepened, and, becoming a flush, rested in evidence of their hearts' awakening; for from that day Kate

never knelt at his feet in childish confidence, nor as a sister clasped his neck.

Richard rode thoughtfully home, and *his* musing fit, and *Kate's* blushes, both sped off into the unseen future, to crown his mother's good intentions—a frostwork of thorns.

CHAPTER IV.

READER! Have you ever met with a young woman who, despite her youth, bore that stamp upon her which involuntarily makes you feel that she was cut out for an old maid in Nature's studio of statuary!—cut out in cold grey granite, rigid and heart-chilling to look upon—whose clothes seem swathed around this chiselled block of stone, like the bandages of an Egyptian mummy, out of which enfolding drop long, pale, thin hands, with nails of scrupulous exactness in length? Toes are first seen propelling forward this sad body, without the slightest undulation of figure, it seems this same granite statue on a truck; then uprises the long, meagre neck, crowned by the cold, unwelcoming face, from which every passion and feeling fly, whether of love, sympathy, or kindliness; the face is a frozen surface, from which they would glide into the cold waters of oblivion for evermore!

Such a being was Angelina: not a tinge of colour ever crossed her cheek, no one had ever seen her smile except in scorn or derision, and then the cold blue lips, shrunken and thin, parted, and the face made a wrinkled grimace; the eyes were of a cold, unchanging greenish-grey; the hair, what colour could it be but white? There seemed no blood in that frame to colour it deeper: it was a cold, sickly flaxen, without the slightest gloss, and this hung in long, lank curls down either side of her cheek—she conceived it beneath the dignity of her great acquirements to study or care for appearance; yet in this

too there was conceit. She looked in her glass, and thought that her pale, studious countenance must win some kindred soul; she fancied her statue-like appearance in accordance with her classical mind. Angelina never for an instant dreamed that any one could do other than admire, though they might dread and shun, her superiority! She had no ambition to be the sun; no, the pale, chaste, lovely moon was she (in her own opinion).

One day, about a fortnight after the events recorded in our first pages, this Angelina sat in the drawing-room in Eaton Square, reading. It would very little interest our readers to know her study; we do not profess a knowledge of classics ourselves, and we will hope that those of our sex reading us have too feminine tastes to care if it were Homer, Ovid, or any other Greek or Latin author. The rougher sex must either pardon and pity our ignorance, or else thank us for not reminding them, too forcibly perhaps, of many a nauseous draught, the wholesome medicine of the mind, which they engulfed at school or college.

Some such draught Angelina sat sipping, and dipping into the same cup was Miss Caffir. This lady's classical taste had been like an Olivian one; at the first essay she disliked the fruit amazingly, but when she discovered that its brackishness was like attic salt, giving zest to the wine-cup of existence, she tasted again, and ended by *almost* liking it. Having merely professed, on entering Mrs. Adair's family, to teach the rudiments of a classical education, just fitted for little boys, she soon, in the keenness of her nature, discovered that Angelina had a decided taste for such food, and that, by ministering to it, she might secure a firm rock whereon to build a house of refuge for the future, with Angelina's mamma; so by under study herself she kept well ahead of her pupil, and now her hopes were crowned with success. Angelina never was happier than in a classical day with her dear Miss Caffir. In appearance—but we need not describe her—she was another of the meagre genius. Verily, persons fed on the dead languages

never grow plump nor thrive like those nourished among the living.

On this day the two sat side by side in dalliance with some favourite page. Mrs. Adair sat apart reading too; but, shame on the degenerated taste—mother of such a daughter—she was reading a mere English novel!

Richard was absent at some hunting-lodge for a few days; Elton, too, had not visited Eaton Square that day. There was a gentle calm around as the bright fire crackled and blazed in the ample grate, and cold November stalked out of doors clad in mist, rain, and yellow fog. It was a frightful day in which to visit London for the first time, especially for a stranger and an orphan. But we will not anticipate events.

With all her coldness, and peculiarity of dress and manner, Angelina dearly loved expense and show; and thought it nothing incompatible with her classical appearance to drape the statue in Thibet shawls and golden tissues! Thus, she too advocated the acceptance of the trust by Lieutenant Lincoln imposed (Captain, however, at the time of his death). Moreover, a certain something in Angelina told her that Mariam was destined to call dormant energies of hers to life; so the girl-victim was shortly expected.

It had been so arranged by dead Lincoln, that this his living child should be cast afloat to seek a home under the immediate charge of an ayah, her Indian maid and nurse; a brother officer had been entrusted to see them off to England, under the care of the captain of the vessel, homeward bound. It would only be known when they arrived in England whether Mrs. Adair accepted or rejected the guardianship, and then, in the latter case, the living freight was to be dropped at Mrs. Wilton's door, Russell Square. It was a very pretty arrangement for any sane man to make, for the sake of leaving behind him an overpowering, muskish odour of sentiment!

A word of introduction for Mrs. Wilton; 'tis a dry business, and the sooner concluded the better.

This lady had been left a widow with two children (girls) at the age of five-and-twenty; she was now in her thirty-first year, her girls nine and ten. It would seem reasonable to believe that all the wit of the Lincoln family had been expended upon her; for it would be difficult to find a person of more sterling good sense, allied to cleverness, than Mrs. Wilton. Some persons have a mania for coupling all their friends; innumerable had been the efforts to lead her, drive her, coax her, any thing, so she again entered into the often rugged road of Hymen.

To all she replied, "I shall never marry again; I am too doubtful of my own wayward heart. I might love my husband very dearly, and, as a matter of course, his children, if Heaven sent us the olive-branches; and God forbid I should give a step-father to Wilton's girls, and possibly become an unjust mother myself. The heart has so many mazes, we never can be sure of steering clearly through them, and I might become sophist enough to think I was doing my duty by them, and at the same time acting unjustly."

"But you need companionship," said one.

"Pardon me, my girls are even now companions to me, and every day becoming more sensible; I have society, too, apart from them."

"But they will grow up, marry, and leave you."

"A good loving mother lives again in her children's children; pray, allow me to remain single."

And this woman, handsome enough to have many admirers, went calmly, but not unlovingly, on her way. She argued that a well-educated mother was the fittest governess for her *girls*—not boys; and the early hours of the day were all devoted to this task of love. Task to them or her is scarcely the term. They were taught in love and gentleness; and, while few children of their years could be met with so well informed, none ever looked more lightly on learning, so happily had it been inculcated, and not alone by books, but by example,

truthfulness, and fearlessness in every thought and act. She was a model mother; as a woman, the most disagreeable person for a coterie of scandal votaries,—she must ask so many ridiculous questions.

Were any one held up to suspicion, any gentle fame whispered over, she would inquire, and loudly too, for authority—whoever dreamed of anything so absurd?—and, by her questionings and doubtings, she ended by diluting the otherwise perfect tale so much, that the weak thing fell fainting to the earth; no one had courage to raise it up—all its spirit was gone. Was any afflicted, beaten down—she stretched forth a hand. Was any purse-proud—she walked them forth, the rotten idol of wood in its gilt crust, which peeled off at her touch, showing the naked ugliness of the wooden thing.

This was the woman the idiot Lincoln eschewed as guardian to his orphan child. It might have been that, as she was his younger sister by so many years, and knowing little of her save by report or letter, he had not a perfect knowledge of her worth. Let us give him the benefit of the better thought.

CHAPTER V.

THE hour was two. A very gloomy day without; every one looked miserable as they hurried through the drizzling rain. Mrs. Adair had once raised her head from the book she was reading, to wonder "when that tiresome girl would arrive, and thus enable them to quit town for the Grange—town was fearfully dull."

To this speech no one responded. Had she spoken in Greek or Hebrew it might have been different; but to leave these languages for mere common English, 'twas absurd to expect it, so a dead silence of some moments followed. What the two students were thinking of, we care little to know; but Mrs. Adair's mind wandered from the book she was reading to India shawls, then back to the volume for awhile, to rush off pell-mell again into £300 a year, and the use she should make of this addition to an already handsome jointure.

"A beautiful passage!" fell at length from Angelina's lips.

"I should question it much," quickly responded her mother, delighted to hear a human voice; "at this season of the year one generally hears of frightful shipwrecks and accidents. I sincerely hope nothing has happened to her!"

Miss Caffir was about to explain the passage of which they had been speaking.

"Never mind mamma," muttered the dutiful Angelina, "she 's always thinking and speaking on the old subject. I 'm quite weary of it!" and another dead silence ensued, broken only by the crackling fire, or turning over of book leaves, with an occasional yawn from mamma.

On a sudden there came a low, dull, rumbling sound through the almost deserted square. Had any one been standing at the window, they would have perceived that almost unknown thing, a hackney-coach, slowly driving round, the driver look-

ing at every door, every number, as if all sense of calculation were gone; for he had been told to drive to—(one in its teens) —and there he was counting step by step, from Number 4! His intellect seemed worn and out of date, like his coach. At last he stopped; it was at Mrs. Adair's. Down he struggled; one mass of dingy capes and an oil-skin hat made the man—the rest was a mystery. Up the steps plodded this moving problem of wet cloth; then rose and fell the knocker—one hollow blow, followed by half a dozen younger ones, younger, smaller, more sprightly. "Ring the bell," stared him in the face; he was far too grateful at having been chosen before half a dozen modern cabs to refuse any request in moderation, so he gave so strong a pull that the wire broke, and the handle remained in his hand; he looked at it a moment, and then quietly seating it on the step, shook his head at it, as if it were looking up upon him reproachfully.

Whilst he was doing this, the drawing-room was in one loud palpitation, one simultaneous shriek had burst from all at the startling summons, and, like a second Babel, a confusion of tongues bespoke their wild terror; then all rose and rushed to the window.

"Caffir, dear," said Angelina, drawing back her dear friend after the first momentary and natural impulse of curiosity, "my presentiments do not deceive me; 'tis that girl! Do not let us forget *our* dignity if others do!" and she glanced angrily at her mother, who heard nothing, saw nothing, but a man's face eagerly watching the hall door from the window of the hackney coach.

Angelina's speech will serve to show two things; first, that she assumed the masculine mode of treating her friend as man does man—she eschewed the miss: it did not yield sufficient force to her friendship for the other; and then "that girl," and "my presentiments," already betokened dislike.

Mrs. Adair stood at the window; Miss Caffir would have given her eyes to look out, but she durst not, and, casting them up in solemn reprehension of Mrs. Adair's want of dignity, she

clasped Angelina's hand. At that moment a servant opened the door, and solicited an audience for a Mr. Blair, of the ship Hercules.

"That's the vessel she was to sail in," joyously exclaimed Mrs. Adair, not noticing the looks of her daughter. "Show him up, Wilks."

Angelina half moved towards the door, dragging her friend with her; she felt offended at this unceremonious meeting with some low creature! However, the almost perfect of us have a flaw; even her dignity gave way to curiosity, and she sank on a sofa, dragging the other after her, and thus they sat like two statues when Mr. Blair walked in.

He bowed round, and then briefly stated that the Hercules had landed her passengers that morning at Gravesend; and the captain, under whose charge Miss Lincoln had been placed, had immediately sent him, a subordinate officer, to town with the young lady and her maid, he being unable himself to quit the vessel.

"I am commissioned," he continued, "to ask madam whether you accept the charge; if not, I am to accompany Miss Lincoln to her aunt's, Mrs. Wilton."

"A most singular method of proceeding!" dropped from Angelina, echoed by Miss Caffir.

"These are my orders," continued Mr. Blair. "Captain Todd will settle the rest when he calls, which he desired me to say would be in a day or two."

"Is Miss Lincoln in that coach at the door?" asked Mrs. Adair.

"She is, madam, and her maid."

"Oh, I keep her, of course!" was the final decision, as if some animal were in question; "let her be brought up directly. By the way, has her luggage come with her?"

She was thinking of the bribe to take this poor orphan—the presents!

"The heavy luggage," replied Mr. Blair, "will be forwarded. Miss Lincoln has but little with her."

"Thank you; then she had better come up at once."

Mr. Blair moved towards the door; he seemed annoyed. A manly look of disgust came over the open countenance of the sailor. He paused in his going, turned, glanced at the statues on the couch, and then said—"I beg pardon if I seem intrusive, madam, but Miss Lincoln made many friends on board—I may call myself an humble one; I would do anything to serve her." And the sunburnt honest face glowed with the energetic words —"I hope—that is," he hastily added, "Captain Todd bade me mention, for she has been more than three months under his care, that Miss Lincoln won the regards of all by her kindness and amiability, and he hoped, and we all hope, she may be fully appreciated here, an orphan in a strange land!"

"My mother, sir," said Angelina, speaking for the first time, "needs no one to dictate a rule of conduct to her!"

"Neither do I presume," he replied, bowing coldly. "I only solicited a kind reception for this orphan at the request of my captain." He seemed, indeed, to doubt it as he quitted the room.

Again Mrs. Adair is at the window, and this time Angelina and Miss Caffir, subduing all pride, are there also.

Not a word is spoken for at least a minute—an age in such a case. The first breath had vent in a suppressed cry from the three; so engrossed were they by the thought of Mariam, that the ayah was quite forgotten. Mr. Blair descended, opened the coach-door, and then, only then, a head advanced. It needed no gentle touch of Angelina's predisposed love to call it black and ugly. It was a perfect negro face in appearance, nothing of the Indian—low, narrow forehead, woolly hair, nostrils looking east and west, lips inside out, which in a broad grin displayed a range of teeth such as only blacks possess, so white and shining; on the head was a showy handkerchief, nationally arranged.

The simultaneous exclamation of "What a wretch!" "The horrid fright!" and lastly, Mrs. Adair's, "Take her away, I wont have her!" for this vision, for a fashionable chaperon,

conquered all desire for Thibet shawls and diamonds. But the words were unheard. The unconscious woman grinned in Mr. Blair's face, then stretched forth a foot—a frightful thing to be so called—and then as suddenly drew it back, and grinned again.

She was quite innocent of a hackney-coach's ways, and how to use them; she did not well seem to understand how, if she advanced one leg down a step, the other would follow it safely on those slanting stairs to earth, off whose surface all carpeting had long since been worn, and only iron remained. Again she advanced a foot, then rising, gave a chuckling laugh, and, jumping out, landed on the flags, much in the form of what children call a "Dutch cheese," where she rested an instant, one lump of shawls, &c. This was the sad orphan! But no, another form rises in the coach, and this one Blair lifts gently but hastily out, and almost carries up the steps. A sigh of relief heaved Mrs. Adair's bosom; the first was the ayah!

"'Tis the servant," said Angelina; "you never can keep that creature in your house, madam; you must send her back."

Before she could reply, Wilks threw open the door, and Lieutenant Blair entered again, leading in Mariam Lincoln. With all their erudition, Angelina and Miss Caffir forgot the difference between a half Indian girl of fifteen and an English one; Mrs. Adair naturally thought of her as of a child to be sent to school. Great, then, was the amazement of all when a woman stood before them, and looking more so from the enfoldings of shawls and cloaks.

How describe her?

As she entered, her gait was slow and languid; Eastern in every movement, characterized by the dignity of *nonchalance*. It would have been too European for her to feel abashed, and then in every heart the inward monitor tells us if we have been rightly and kindly treated; the girl, too, like those accustomed from natural langour, or voluptuousness of climate, to speak little, was prone to read the countenance. She had read disap-

pointment and annoyance in Blair's, and her inward monitor said "It would have been more kindly done to have come down to welcome and receive you."

With this feeling uppermost, she, the once spoilt child of a doting father, concealed her sensation of bitterness and sorrow in a stern proud look, which made that young face more aged and rigid in expression.

Mariam was not a wild Indian as they had seemed inclined to anticipate, but one who, from her father's position—he having held for years a high situation in the civil service—had mixed in much society, and had known its laws from infancy.

Blair led her gently in. A large cloak, evidently some man's, possibly his own, to guarantee her against the cold and wet, was fastened round her neck, and trailed after her in long heavy folds like a train, giving her increased dignity of mien, though rather burlesqued, like a child playing queen. The figure beneath was wrapped in a large shawl, and the hands gloved almost like those of a Parisian, showing how very tiny they were, as one held her shawl across her bosom, whilst the other was clasped in Blair's. On her head she wore a close straw bonnet, a mere travelling one, crossed with a black ribbon; and now we come to the face. All we have described Angelina took in in a glance of bleak dislike and envy.

Who has not noticed the extreme beauty of some of the Indian faces in London?—those very men who, as Richard had predicted, would claim Mariam as niece? Such a face was hers—not so dark, but the olive brunette of a perfectly Spanish complexion. The same large, veiled, dark-hazel, not black eyes, of the high-caste native, aquiline nose, and firm, well-formed lip; and down her neck hung masses of raven, true raven hair, in natural curls. Behind her came in the ayah, her face lit up with a broad grin! Poor ayah! *She* had come rejoicing in novelty; her mistress felt nothing new *could* compensate for the old—a father's and mother's love. No one welcomed Mariam; so Mariam, forgetting herself in this chilling

reception, felt shy and awkward; and, hanging back from Blair's advancing arm, gazed on the group before her.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Adair. "This cannot be Captain Lincoln's daughter!—he was so very fair!" She forgot her first fears of a perfectly black girl.

"It must be some imposture!" cried Angelina. "Why, this girl is at least five-and-twenty!"

They had all expected to see a thin, miserable dwarfish child, of not above twelve in appearance, shrivelled up by heat of climate.

Mariam looked a moment petrified, then putting up one hand, unloosened the heavy cloak, and gasped for breath; its weight and her reception choked her.

"Mrs. Adair," said her conductor sternly, not appearing to notice the words, and hastening to cover the poor girl's emotion—he felt her tremble—"I have the honour to present you Miss Lincoln."

"Is it *really* Miss Lincoln?" asked Mrs. Adair, still incredulously. "Why, she is quite a young woman!" And she advanced towards her. Mrs. Adair was not a bad-hearted, but a very silly, weak woman.

"Take me away—take me back!" whispered the girl to Blair, shrinking from the advancing welcomer.

"What does she say?" inquired Angelina.

"She seems far too free in her manners with this young man," whispered Miss Caffir to her friend. An acquiescent nod was the reply.

"Miss Lincoln, madam," said Blair, speaking with difficulty, he felt so indignant, "is naturally a little embarrassed among strangers, and the fatigue of a long journey. Would it not be better, just for the present, to send her to her aunt, Mrs. Wilton? I will take her with pleasure."

He did not know anything of this latter lady, but felt anywhere would be better than here; he drew her gently back as he spoke towards the door. Her cloak had fallen to the ground; she receded gently and lightly over it, and the

eye lit up with a faint hope, though still fixed almost in fear on the cold group before her.

"Dear me, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Adair, still advancing, and grasping the hand which involuntarily shrunk from hers. "She will be very happy here, I am sure. I was taken by surprise at first. I expected to see a child; I cannot now quite comprehend it."

"You would do well to see some proof of her identity," suggested Angelina, "before burdening yourself with her." Blair turned pale, then coloured deeply.

"Pray, permit me to take Miss Lincoln to her aunt," he asked anxiously. "Nature will cry to nature; she, I am sure, will receive her niece gladly."

"Not at all!" answered Mrs. Adair. We shall understand each other perfectly soon; but she is so unlike her father—her mother must have been *very* dark! Come, my dear," this was said to Mariam, "don't shrink away from me; we will make you quite comfortable. Don't look so sad; are you fatigued? Will you take a glass of wine and a biscuit?"

With all her efforts, Mrs. Adair could not give the touch of feeling to her speech which would have won the poor girl's confidence. A glass of wine and a biscuit, and not one caress to the orphan stranger!

"Nothing, thank you, madam," was the tremulous reply.

"I dare say the girl's an epicure," sneered Angelina, in an audible whisper, "and will expect hot tiffins of curry, and feel disgusted with English living."

"Then you can leave her, Mr.——I forget your name," said Mrs. Adair, dropping the hand she had scarcely touched, and falling back; "and perhaps that person," pointing by gesture to the ayah, who, comprehending but very imperfectly the scene, had crept to her young mistress's side, "had better remain a day or two, to reconcile her to the change, and Captain Todd, when he comes, can take her back. I will provide an attendant for Miss Lincoln."

"Send Leah away from me!" exclaimed Mariam, her eyes

and face kindling; "I shall die if she leave me!" and, turning towards the humble friend of years, she flung both arms around her neck, and burst into tears; they were tears worthy her home—large, burning, heavy drops, from clouds weeping over coming storms.

"There's temper!" ejaculated Angelina; she will require severe coercion."

"No, no!" said Leah, shaking her head in defiance, as she hugged the girl to her heart; "me no go—me no leave my Bibi Missy."

"I believe, Mrs. Adair," said Blair, struggling to be calm, and chary for the girl's sake among so many rocks, "Captain Lincoln, so I have been given to understand, has made it an especial proviso that this servant shall remain with her young mistress."

An angry discussion followed this announcement, which ended in the affair being left in doubt until the will should be consulted. The first passionate flood of tears shed, Mariam rose from Leah's neck, strengthened and prepared for sorrow, and, taking Blair's hand, most kindly thanked him for all his attention and thought for her comfort; and with the ease of a woman allied to a child's gentleness and timidity, hoped they should meet soon again, and often. With such a hope and prayer, how often we part from some genial spirit crossing our path, and never meet again!

The others looked on with various emotions; they were still governed by surprise, at this child of their brain's creation.

Thus Blair and Mariam parted, while Leah, in homely warmth, shook his hand; bowing coldly to the others, he followed Wilks down stairs, with a heavy heart for the orphan girl.

CHAPTER VI.

THE luggage is in the hall, the hackney-coach gone, and in it Blair. A servant opens the drawing-room door, to inquire whether Miss Lincoln's boxes shall be taken up to her room? At this question, the almost silence which had followed Blair's departure was broken, for Mrs. Adair had been whispering to the other two to give Mariam time to recover herself; it was kindly intended, like all she did, but not judiciously, for it gave an appearance of estrangement from the poor girl not intended.

"Of course," answered Mrs. Adair, turning round delighted at the interruption. "And—stop, Wilks" (this was to the departing man), "tell Mrs. ——but no, I'll go myself. Come, my dear" (to Mariam), "I will take you to your room, and I daresay we shall soon be better acquainted."

As she spoke, advancing, she took one of the poor girl's trembling hands.

"Surely, madam," cried Angelina, looking up haughtily—but she generally looked thus—"you are not going to usurp the place of your housekeeper? Pray do not so much forget what is due to yourself! Surely, if Mrs. Denham is worthy enough to show your usual guests to their rooms, she may content Miss Lincoln!"

Mrs. Adair dropped the girl's hand, and said to Wilks, "Tell Mrs. Denham to come here. Sit down, my dear" (this was to Mariam); "you will find Mrs. Denham an exceedingly nice person, and she will see that your room shall have every comfort."

Mrs. Denham entered—the portrait of a London housekeeper. A cold-looking brown satin dress, rather scanty, and a blonde cap, with nondescript flowers in the borders, set on a stiff, unturnable head, and decking the primmest face in the world.

She glanced aside at the new-comers; she saw they were shivering in the cold bath of their reception, so she threw in a pailful of ice in a—"This way, if you please, Miss!" and (to her mistress), "Please, ma'am, what am I to do with this person?" looking scornfully at Leah; "she was not expected, I think."

"My nurse will remain in my own room," answered Mariam, in as firm a tone as her emotions permitted, looking sternly at the rigid Mrs. Denham, who stood aghast at her assurance, before Miss Angelina, too, whom every one feared.

"Come, Leah, dear," continued the girl, in a soft, gentle tone, turning towards her humble friend; and then she slowly quitted the room, thus accompanied, to the amazement of all at her dignified manner.

An hour elapsed. What was said in that time in bitterness against her, it is not necessary to record; but in the midst of it the door opened, and in walked Richard, the truant.

"What!" he cried, "all assembled in council! Whom are you sitting upon? How are you, ma'am?" and he advanced to embrace his parent. Angelina never said, "How d'ye do?" or "Good bye," when he came or went, unless they were forced from her. These little ordinary civilities of life were quite beneath her superiority over her brother.

Mrs. Adair generally rose joyously to embrace her well-beloved son; to-day she shrank pettishly from him, exclaiming, "Upon my word, Richard, I have reason to thank you for your dutiful attention to my wishes! Four days since you promised to return, and certainly I might *at least* expect this much of respect from you!"

"Dear mother," he answered, laughing, and trying to kiss her despite herself, "what have I done? *only* four days after my time! I'm sure it isn't much; and the ground in such capital condition for hunting!" Richard was right; neither was it much for a man, especially a huntsman, in damp November weather, when the scent lies so beautifully on the ground! He felt her injustice keenly.

"And there," she said at last, delighted to have found an excellent pretext for her anger, "is the grey horse I was so very anxious to have your opinion about as a match for 'Peacock' gone—sold; they kept it a day for me."

"Never mind, mother," he said, coaxingly, securing a reluctant hand at last, which he patted and kissed, as he dropped into a chair beside her. "I'll find you a better match to-morrow."

Richard was very fond of his mother, though not blind to her faults; and he had almost enticed her into good-humour, when Angelina burst forth with a sarcasm. Though well used to these, he saw something must be very wrong, all were so cross. Somehow of late he had traced all ill-temper as connected with the coming of Mariam; this now again struck him.

"What the deuce is the matter with you all?" he asked. "Is there any bad news of the Hercules? Are all the shawls and diamonds gone to decorate the whales and porpoises? I say nothing of Blackey; she's of no consequence."

"Once for all, Richard," answered his mother, enchanted with this legitimate cause for anger, "I will NOT allow you to call *my* ward by that odious title; I beg I may not hear it again, especially as it cannot but hurt and offend her feelings."

"Miss Lincoln arrived an hour since, and has just gone with Mrs. Denham to her room," hazarded Miss Caffir, unable to refuse herself the pleasure of being the first to tell it.

"Arrived!" he cried, dropping his mother's hand, which he had retained despite her struggles, and rising coldly from his seat, while a rigid look of surprise and pain crossed his fine face. "Arrived! gone with Mrs. Denham, the housekeeper, to her room! Oh, mother!" and he turned reproachfully towards her.

In less than a minute he had taken the whole affair in review. He forgot the transition for this poor child had been gradual. He made one leap from India—her glowing, native country, with all its riches and charms to her—to Eaton Square on this bleak November day, with Angelina to withhold his mother

from all kindness, and the formal housekeeper to show her her room—for he, too, thought of her only as a child. The keenest pang of compassionate sorrow he had ever felt passed through his really good heart. One stride took him to the door, one spring up the stairs, and he stood at Mariam's chamber.

"She is only a child—a little puny girl!" thus he thought of her in his mind; so with her there needed no ceremony. He heard Mrs. Denham's voice, and, flinging open the door, hastily entered,

"So, my poor little girl," he said, both arms outstretched to welcome her; he had been going to add, "You've arrived at last; how are you? can I do anything for you?" but as he entered, Mariam turned hastily round; she had cast off shawl and bonnet, and the dark, handsome face looked in amazement, as the ear brought a kind tone to light it up. Never was a man more surprised than Richard; he half drew back and coloured, then as suddenly advancing, said,—

"Forgive my unceremonious intrusion, I expected to see a child: are you Miss Lincoln?"

"Yes, I am," she gently answered, and the first smile in that cold house crossed her cheek.

"I'm very glad to see you," he replied, taking her hand. "Can I do any thing to make you feel at home? Pray, command me. Are you fatigued? Won't you take something? Let Mrs. Denham send you some refreshment up here—pray, go, and do so;" and the amazed and angry housekeeper, crushed in the condescending part she was playing to Mariam, found herself waved from the room by one she durst not disobey. Mariam was almost crying with emotion at this unexpected kindness.

"Who are you?" she articulated in a trembling tone, looking him full in the face, as though to read his soul, almost in fear of deception.

"Oh! I forgot, you don't know me: I am Dick Adair—so my friends call me—just come from the country; a rough fellow you see; but never mind that,—I dare say you'll know me better soon."

As he spoke, he saw the tears gradually filling the poor orphan's eyes. "And who is that?" he asked, turning towards Leah to divert her thoughts; "your ayah, I suppose?"

"My dear nurse and friend," answered the friendless girl.

"I'm glad she has come with you; you must not leave your mistress," he said, turning to Leah; "we'll make you comfortable here."

"Me no leave Missy Mariam, not me," answered the woman, showing all her white teeth in a broad grin of gratitude.

"I hear Mrs. Denham and the tray," cried he, dropping Mariam's hand after a hearty pressure; then turning to Leah, not to appear cognizant of the tears his kind words had called forth, he said, "Now, what's your name? Oh—Leah, is it? Help me to urburden this table of all its load," and away flew across the room on a sofa, sundry books of Angelina's choosing for Mariam's study, and a round little table was drawn towards the fire, just struggling into brightness, and on this table was placed the tray, which a quiet-looking servant brought in—Mrs. Denham was too angry to return herself.

Mrs. Adair sat awhile wondering what Richard could be about! Unable to bear a longer suspense, she crept upstairs, and entering the room, which was a dressing-room preceding the bed-chamber, she found her son and Mariam side by side; a charming fire, a pleasantly and softly lighted lamp on the table (remember, reader, it was four o'clock in November), and he coaxing her to eat, as though they were acquaintances of months, while Leah laughed with glee to see her poor child looking almost happy!

"Ah!" he cried, looking up, but not moving, "here is my dear mother come to see if you are comfortable, Miss Lincoln! I told you," he continued, addressing his parent and giving her a significant look, "that I should be the better person to bring our little stranger here to bear with our northern customs and climate; the young meet the young half-way. Miss Lincoln already begins to think me something like a brother, though a great bear, don't you?"

Mariam had risen when his mother entered; she looked in his face, but could not speak, yet the gaze was all eloquent with gratitude.

"Now, dear mother," he continued, rising and drawing her to his seat, "come, take my place beside our young friend, and here, Leah, give me another chair."

He placed Mariam's hand in his mother's as he spoke, and then continued rattling on in the same strain, to endeavour by these means to do away with the first impression—the almost fear and repulsion he noticed on the girl's part towards Mrs. Adair; and he freely admitted to himself, knowing little as he did of their first meeting, that it was not without cause. If he hoped ever to remove that first cruel impression, he was mistaken—Mariam's character was of too stern a mould; and the whole of that scene on her arrival had confirmed this point in her natural disposition for ever; it was a seed sown whose root never would be eradicated. This same cause gave Richard a hold upon her mind which nothing could make her forget. Mariam was not an ordinary girl, and even were he to change, and become like the others, he would still be to her the one who had first spoken kindness in this prison-house; the first who made a tear of gentle feeling flow.

CHAPTER VII.

LET us pass over the cold winter, and leap into the month of April, the bride of the year—for a bride it seems to us: so young, fair, and freshly clad, ignorant alike of summer's heat or winter's chill, a loving child still, the wide world before it, unknown, unlearned. Smiling one moment beneath the embrace of her loving spouse, glowing as the god of day, and then before the smile has passed, bursting into tears in memory of the home she has quitted, with the mother's farewell still ringing in her ears.

Mrs. Adair has just returned to town for the season from the Grange, and with her Angelina, Mariam, and the creature Angelina hated above all else in the world, Leah. Mariam she might annoy in various ways—wound or oppress; but with this mere servant she was powerless! She *felt* Leah despised, understood, and, without the slightest ebullition of feeling, thwarted her in every way; and her simplest tone generally acted as a balsam to heal, in an instant, the wounds her venomous tongue inflicted on poor Mariam.

In vain Angelina had endeavoured to make her mother send the girl to school for at least a year or two. This she urged on finding the impossibility of sufficiently oppressing her at home.

But, though a very weak woman, Mrs. Adair was not a bad-hearted one, and, moreover, Richard and Elton were there to judge her; and, in the face of truth and justice, she was compelled to admit that Mariam was far better educated, in many respects, though not a classical lady, than Angelina: *this* was the true cause of this latter's almost insane hatred of her. She was very young, certainly handsome, in her rigid, stern, Indian beauty, moulded in form as *only* Indian women are, well educated, and, a few flaws apart, a perfect creature. We have

said, in charity, the best of her; let the reader detect the defects. A few touches, by way of accomplishments, might have been added to her education; but in good, sterling, necessary knowledge, she had nothing to learn, having been placed early in the charge of an excellent English governess, under the immediate eye of a sensible mother.

The season promised to be a stormy one to Angelina; for, despite all her manœuvring to prevent it, Mariam was to be introduced; this was another clause in the extraordinary will her father had made. It really appeared as if the foolish man, though resolved to die at the stake of sentiment, had his misgivings about the prudence of his choice of guardian for his poor child, and dreaded some neglect or injustice.

One thing we have totally omitted to mention; but we imagine the reader's perspicacity will have gone hand in hand with facts, and guessed that the man who sent Thibet shawls and diamonds, with a setting of three hundred pounds a year, to the guardian, did not leave the ward penniless; no, Mariam was that most melancholy object—an heiress!

We are not speaking ironically; for, great blessing as money may be, what a curse it becomes when a young, innocent heart is put in the opposite balance! How everything about her becomes tinged with a sickly, bilious hue! And this colouring arises from the god all worship—gold. It is, indeed, like the plant Moore speaks of, which "tinges the teeth of the fawn;" for scarcely anything, not even pure ivory, can escape the infecting stain. Mariam, to whom money had ever been as dross, soon learned this; for she heard little else but "with your fortune you will make a splendid match; you can command any one—everything!" until, at last, the girl in sheer disgust almost longed to be poor, only knowing the witch (a witch in truth) by name. And by degrees a cold thought became generated in her young heart—"I shall never be loved for myself!" And love, the aim of every heart, every existence, seemed as lost to her as Heaven's glorious sky, in storm or peace, to the blind.

Yes, Mariam had forty thousand pounds in perspective the day she should marry, or come of age!

Poor Lieutenant Lincoln acted wisely in worldly wisdom the day he exchanged into an Indian regiment, and thence into the civil service, where his breaking heart stood in no wise in the way of a rapidly acquired fortune, to which his marriage added a good portion.

* * * * *

"So, Mariam, my love, you are going to your first ball to-morrow night?" said Mrs. Wilton, as she and her niece—young aunt, young niece—sat quietly at work in a little snug room, all flowers and woman's pretty untidiness, in Russell Square. "Do you anticipate much pleasure?"

"No, dear aunt," answered Mariam, looking up from a something she had been very busy with in coloured silks; "do you know I would much rather not go?"

"Much rather not go!" exclaimed her aunt in surprise, accentuating every word. "Why not? You must have some reason for so unnatural a wish at your age."

"Oh! there has been so much said about it, so many discussions about my dress, *et cetera*, that I am quite weary already. I know that I shall not like it, besides—besides——"

"Well, what besides?"

"Oh! I shall know no one; and you will not be there; and with whom shall I dance?"

"Why, were *I* there," answered her aunt, laughing, "you would scarcely dance with me! Of whom are you thinking?" and she fixed her large brown eyes seriously on Mariam's face.

The girl did not blush—she seemed almost too stern, though so girlish, for girlish acts; but the eye fell, and its lash quivered.

"I dislike dancing with strangers," she replied, after a pause.

"Mr. Adair will not then accompany his mother and sister?" asked Mrs. Wilton, looking at her, but with seeming indifference, by the tone of voice,

"I presume not; he told me yesterday he hated balls, and was otherwise engaged."

"But surely, Mariam, all the pleasure of the evening does not depend upon the presence of Mr. Adair? I hope not." These last words were uttered in a tone of half fear, half prayer.

"No, aunt," answered the girl, looking up hastily and impetuously; "surely you do not think his absence could cause me pain? I only feel how much I dislike going out alone with the others and Mr. Elton; Richard turns many a shaft aside which else might wound me. I am *only* grateful to him;" and the proud lips pressed each other, perhaps to hide a gentler thought which had well-nigh escaped them.

"I hope so, dear child; for it would be a bitter trial to me the day I saw you loving Mr. Adair."

"I know you think ill of Richard," said she, again looking down.

"Dear Mariam, why call him Richard so familiarly?" cried Mrs. Wilton impatiently.

"He asked me to do so; besides, living as we do, like brother and sister, he calling me Mariam, how can I do otherwise?"

"Yet you call his sister Miss Adair."

"Oh! I never could call her Angelina," exclaimed the girl, looking up with startling energy; "she is too repulsive to me."

This reply seemed still less to please Mrs. Wilton; it was a confirmation of her fear, that her niece liked young Adair too well to remove him by any estranging barrier from her regard, but she wisely changed the conversation by asking,—

"And what dress *do* you wear?"

"Only imagine, dear aunt," and she encircled the other's waist fondly, as if grateful that she had changed the current of her questionings, "Mrs. Adair wished me to wear that horrid thing, covered with stars; she said it looked rich. I should have been like a rambling sky!"

"You mean the gold lama," laughed Mrs. Wilton, caressing the long rich curls of raven black which rested on her bosom.

"Yes, that horrid lama which came with me. I hate rich things; people would be sure to ask who I was, and then I should hear the eternal phrase which drove me so frantic at the Grange—'She's an heiress!' Dear aunt, you cannot think how sick I was of it. Everybody whispered it in my hearing, until I used to rush off by myself into the lonely woods, and rejoice at seeing the boughs, *still* black and leafless, however much I looked upon them; for the feeling had become one so painful to me, from ever hearing people say 'You can command anything you please,' that I dreaded almost lest Nature herself should become servile, and burst into an unseasonable garb to please me!"

"My dearest Mariam," cried her aunt, in almost terror, "you should check this cold, morbid feeling; it will lead you into much sorrow," and she embraced her tenderly.

"Do you know," cried Mariam, starting up with energy, "that there are but three persons in the world I have confidence in?"

"And if you prove three pure and faithful at the termination of life's journey, you will be a happy woman, my Mariam. Who are they? I am one, of course?" and she smiled, but it was forced—she dreaded the enumeration—as she drew the girl again beside her.

"Oh, you—yes—you! and then Leah, and," she hesitated a moment, "Richard Adair," she continued, unfalteringly; "why should I deny it? for he was my first friend, when I was friendless, among those cold hearts. And now he never bends to me, as others do; he is harsh often. I don't think he likes me, and he certainly does not hesitate in showing it."

"Beware, Mariam, there may be quite as much depth in this seeming coldness as in servility or attention."

"Dear aunt!" almost shrieked the girl, "do not take this one drop of comforting hope from me in the bitter draughts of my everyday existence: I do not love Richard Adair, but I esteem him—don't take *that* from me."

"I am perhaps wrong in opening life's darker pages to your

young eye, Mariam, but I dread for you. I *know*—do not ask me how—but I know Richard Adair to be a *roué*, a gambler, a man of no fixed principle of good, and loving you, as I do, judge what my fears are."

"You have been deceived, I am sure you have," whispered the girl, with trembling lips. "I know he has faults, but whose fault is that?—his mother's. I have heard him regret so bitterly that his father died so soon, leaving him without a counsellor or guide."

"Let us drop the subject, dear," said Mrs. Wilton, sadly. "I have done my duty in warning you; I can but trust now to your own good sense to guide you."

"Oh, would I were poor!" cried Mariam, bursting into tears; and tears to her were as weeping to a man—they seared, not healed.

"Riches are blessings, well employed, my dear child."

"Oh no!" sobbed Mariam. "Curses, aunt—curses! they turn all to ashes; smiles become grimaces, sympathy and affection, base worldly things, selling themselves in life's bazaar!—a Jew's bargain to a Gentile fool! Heaven keep me from such purchase!"

"Mariam, Mariam!" cried her aunt, terrified at her violence, as she encircled her in her arms, "be yourself, be calm—promise me you will think more reasonably, and, I trust, justly, of mankind, or your life will be indeed a burden to you."

"And you who now say this, bade me even suspect him who has ever been a friend to me, though only in pity."

And she fixed her now tearless, but burning, eyes on the other.

"I would not—Heaven knows, Mariam—circumscribe your heart's warm affections: I would enlarge, but well direct them."

"Then let me *prove* Richard Adair unworthy before you condemn—do not fear me; but he is my *first* remembrance not mixed with pain, in this cold land, to me—for I did not know

you then—and do not bid me turn from the hand which first took mine, until I prove it base. Why deny human nature, in my person, the privilege awarded to the brute—instinct, by which to know our friends and enemies?"

"Because Heaven has given man sense and reason to raise him above the mere animal; these are more than instinct."

"I like my half-savage instinct better than all reasoning power!" cried Mariam, impetuously. "It has taught me to be grateful to and to trust Richard Adair, as much as I fear and hate his sister!"

The poor girl was all emotion; her voice trembled, her hands were clasped. Mrs. Wilton feared lest, in seeking to avert an evil, she might not have raised an ungovernable demon, named "obstinacy," which leads many a one head-foremost to destruction. She did not well know her niece yet; so, gently as possible, she soothed the ruffled spirit of the child in years—but woman, strong woman at heart—and they parted, as the two ever did, with mutual regret, and Mariam returned to her unloved, uncongenial home.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARIAM LINCOLN was as a cloud, now, in a summer's evening sky. The hour is twilight, the heavens calm, and the cloud sails on almost imperceptibly, a gentle voluptuous movement, floating onward in its flowing robes of fleecy white. The sky is changed, the moon has risen, troubled, and anxiously watching the flying forms around her—on comes the white-robed, calm cloud of an hour before: it, too, is ruffled, flying—whither? it knows not, but on, on it goes in untranquil haste. Surely it will respect the Queen of Night, and pause in its career! No, onward it comes, unhesitating, hasty, but still dignified; it passes as a veil before the moon, and the world is in darkness.

Thus, indeed, she was all impulse and impetuosity; she looked upon everything as predestined, as a fate. She had enough of the Indian maid about her to have cast a magic lamp at eve on any stream, and have wept in bleak despair if it faded or sunk. She sailed along the majestic, fleecy cloud, calm in peace; flying, hurrying, overwhelming all in her excitement—because, such was her fate! Such had nature's Great Master made her, and bade her be! All was predestined, therefore self-control would be but a vain task.

The Mariam of Mrs. Wilton's boudoir, and the Mariam who from thence entered Mrs. Adair's, were two different persons. Now she was cold and calm, prepared to bear all which might be inflicted, as Heaven might will it; but she was generally too much disgusted with the petty means tried to annoy her to be more than cold and impassive; moreover, being prepared for all, little surprised her.

Of course she had been presented at Court, and "Miss Lincoln, by Mrs. Adair," had shone in the *Post*, with a full account of the splendid dress and glittering jewels of the

heiress. On that day, despite all Angelina's efforts to flurry and alarm her, she was the cloud of our metaphor sailing along careless and indifferent!

For weeks before she had had a special professor of deportment, to drill her into propriety of step, manner, and train-bearing over the arm, before entering the presence. In vain Angelina and Miss Caffir sat rigidly by to put her out of countenance. Mr. Blank, though seeing little to correct in this calm, dignified nature, of course found an arm too angular, a step too hurrying, a shoulder stooping! Mariam listened to all, but amended nothing, not from conceit—she had none—but pure listless indifference, and voluptuous dislike to trouble. Angelina was bitter, Mr. Blank suggestive, Miss Caffir tittering. Mariam's thoughts were away from all; therefore, when all had been done, she walked the same as ever—gliding and noiselessly—the head sat as freely as ever on the shoulders, and the train fell in natural grace from the rounded arm! It was a case for despair! Nothing could make her awkward in look or action. Angelina ground her teeth, reserving, however, a hope for the day of presentation.

Mariam, without conceit, had, however, one vulnerable point—her Achilles' heel was her complexion. In her Indian home she had learned the distaste Europeans have to black blood; here it had been doubly impressed on her mind. Black blood is negro blood; she knew hers was not this, but she was painfully alive to a suspicion of it. Angelina guessed this, and full often the girl's quivering lip compressed, to hide her suffering at some sarcasm, scarcely veiled enough for common politeness. Men, too, have an odd way of speaking of girls; if one have black eyes and hair, even though the skin be Parian marble, they term her "a little black girl;" but, fortunately, all tastes are not alike: some admire "little black girls," others prefer "albinos," others the betwixt and between." We again distinctly repeat, that Mariam's susceptibility exaggerated her tint; she was of a clear Biscayan complexion, no more. Thus the day of presentation arrived, and as Mariam glided through

he long corridor at St. James's, her train over her arm, a buzz ssailed her ears.

"Who is she!" asked one.

"Some Indian princess," suggested another.

"No, for there is no suite."

"By heavens!" exclaimed a third, "what a beautiful)riental face!"

No one could term Mariam "pretty," "handsome," or "beauiful," or "hideous," according to taste, but she must excite n extreme, a superlative.

All these she heard; so did Angelina, who marched before er, with a bitter heart of envy.

They quitted the corridor, and found themselves in the rush, where all seem rushing on, until you expect to see one uge mass roll pell-mell—stars, garters, diamonds, and feathers -to her Majesty's feet. And here, in this crush, was poor lariam's heart stricken down. First came the—"Who's hat?" followed by—"What a little black girl!"

"But she has deucedly fine features."

"And feathers and diamonds," answered a crabbed old owager, as she fanned the shrivelled cheeks heated by layers f rouge and white lead!

"Is it Queen Pomare?" whispered an albino young lady.

"Doubtful," answered a wag (overhearing the remark), in a iend's ear; "she's too much caparisoned for that; her Pomarian ajesty's full dress, they say, consists of a coral necklace!"

Mariam heard every word, and it needed not Angelina's iumphant look, as she turned round towards her, to add to er bitterness. Poor girl! she was too much galled to weep, ut she groaned in spirit, and thought of those in their graves hom she had loved so well, and she almost hated them, for—nder Heaven's will—creating her.

Some one pushed forward in the crowd—she felt a hand on er arm and looked up—her eyes were dilated with her heart's angs.

"This crush fatigues and alarms you," said a kind voice.

"Lean on me—'tis ever an ill-arranged affair. I often wonder why some better means are not adopted."

It was Elton, a man whom she had hitherto rather disliked and avoided.

"Thank you," she uttered, in a low, nervous tone. "I wish I were out of it. Mrs. Adair bade me keep close, and here 'tis most difficult."

"A stupid affair altogether," he answered. "What possible benefit can it be to you to be dragged up to her Majesty's feet, and then pushed away again. But, I suppose fashion must have its laws obeyed."

"I would I were dead—I would I were dead!" muttered the impatient spirit of this fettered humanity. "Nothing but sorrow, suffering, and death at last!"

"What do you say?" asked Elton, kindly. She did not reply. "You wished yourself dead, I think? Don't wish that, if you *really* desire it, for your prayer will not be granted. Heaven seldom listens to us in our impatience. Come, here we are; now I must deliver you to your chaperon, but I shall watch for your *sortie*. I am glad I have been of service to you, though in so little."

"Thank you—thank you, Mr. Elton," she replied, and a faint smile flitted over that young rigid face, she felt so grateful to any one for *daring* to show attention to the "little black girl." Poor Mariam knew not the value of fashionable phraseology and men of the world's slang. On her return, the "Who is she?" had been answered somewhere, and she seemed to move onward, the *tableau vivant* of one universal whisper—

"She's an heiress."

There may be some in the world as desolate and lonely at heart as poor Mariam; if so, they will perfectly comprehend and feel acutely for this Oriental plant on our cold shores.

Some are blessed from infancy with dear companionship; they grow up a cluster of buds, bloom into rich flowers, and,

when their leaves fall, their "mates of the garden" are watching around them, breathing fresh incense over their dying hour, to make it pass as a sweet dream. Happy these! Some are torn early apart from their fellows; what if they be placed in a rich vase, can all its beauty make their solitude gay, or give them the kindred stem on which they grew to life?

Like this was Mariam; she had been the idol of both parents, surrounded, too, by loving friends. Her mother died—it was a severe blow to her young heart, but she was *so* young that a father's affection, which all then devolved upon herself, soothed and reconciled her. Death came again! and this time it was mother, father, friends, all; for, by the will of a lunatic, her father tore her from all. Instead of leaving her to the care of some valued friend in India, he rooted up this flower from its rich native soil, and sent it to wither in our cold clime, and oh! worse than all, in bitter solitude, though of this he was ignorant, or indifferent, in the anxiety to carry out his sentimental purpose.

It is a sad truth, that when Death lays his cold hand upon us, we too often become apathetic, even with respect to our dearest, fondest hopes. Few cherish these warmly when the eye sees the gate of eternity before it. We know that that once passed, it closes on our earthly career, and we become selfish, even for our best beloved, and often we leave them to battle with ills which one moment's energy might have spared them. This energy we should have found, had our physician said, "Exert yourself, and you can command life!" Oh! then, the garb of apathy would have been cast aside, and the dying man, with renewed vigour, have risen to battle again for existence. Oh! we are a mass—a huge ugly mass—of selfishness! and how we deceive ourselves! Old age is doubly selfish. Is it that generosity is but the gossamer down on the butterfly of early morning? Brush it off, and only the ugly naked worm remains beneath!

Captain Lincoln had had many doubts, even whilst making his will; but the climate made him older than his years, and then the apathy of certain death crept over him, and he argued,

"The girl is rich, she must make friends in England; I have done my duty to her, so let it be;" and he closed his eyes in peace, not once thinking of the misery those friends bring to a feeling heart who only come because we are rich.

In the midst of all, Mariam was in utter solitude—that solitude which often made her utter her thoughts aloud, that the aching heart might breathe a sympathetic answer to her deep wretchedness. To whom could she speak of her annoyances at the drawing-room? Her delicacy towards one she loved, even though her dependant, forbade her uttering them to the poor black Leah; besides, Leah, though all love for her, could not comprehend half the sufferings of her finer mind. If she spoke of it to Mrs. Wilton, much as she loved her, she feared lest it might be attributed to wounded vanity; and vanity she despised. No one could comprehend the force of that galling term on her soul in the simple phrase, "That black girl."

There was one who, without ever having evinced much kindness towards her, sincerely pitied her: this was Elton. He had been for months watching this girl, resolved not to spoil her by over-attention, not to soothe too much, lest a proud spirit should rebel too violently against oppression; but he watched, judged her correctly, resolving to be a prop when she most should need one, and, if possible, guide her safely over the rugged path her too susceptible nature would plough into deep furrows for her own footsteps. It was this thought which led him to her Majesty's palace of St. James's the day Mariam was dragged thither to do homage to her queen.

To Angelina's great annoyance—for she even had a sort of fear of Elton's sarcasms—he was watching for their exit, and, after handing them into their carriage, composedly took the fourth place himself, thus sparing Mariam many cutting remarks, and gave her time to recover before reaching Eaton Square; once there, he knew she would have Leah, who stood like a *cheval de frise* between her and Angelina.

CHAPTER IX.

We have seen that Mariam said nothing of her bitter annoyance at the drawing-room to her aunt; she passed it over as an event Mrs. Adair deemed necessary, a sort of licence taken out by the unmarried ladies of the *beau monde* to shoot Cupid's arrows at every eligible man—which reads, every elder son and *millionnaire*—only it looks better to clothe it in a mantle of royal blue, a loyal homage. It would not appear so well to hang out a flag of distress, a sort of union-jack!

Mariam spoke to no one of her bitterness, so the "little black girl" nestled the closer within her soul, her soul's secret.

Could persons only foresee how many a word lightly spoken embitters years of a fellow-creature's existence, perhaps colouring some page of crime, from very recklessness, full many an idle word would be left unsaid. There is not on earth a more sorrowful possession to the possessor than too much susceptibility.

When Mariam returned from Mrs. Wilton's after the conversation we have detailed a few pages back, she found the great question of her dress for the coming ball had been decided by Angelina; and Leah's first act, when she entered her room, was to show her, extended on her bed, a dress of pea-green, rich-watered silk! Had all the envious hearts in the world been set to work to invent a hideous costume for Mariam, they could not have chosen better. A heavy silk for so young a girl's first ball—and pea-green! Mariam was no saint to bear all patiently: she was only a mere mortal girl, and after very quietly looking at it said—

"Leah, put that thing away; I shall not wear it."

"Missy Adair sent him, with him love," grinned the attendant, in her peculiar phraseology.

"Then take it back, Leah, with my best thanks, and say I cannot wear green."

The corners of her mouth twitched in a manner betokening how near her eyes the tears were, for before them she saw the unfading scroll, "that black girl."

"Come here, him come here!" exclaimed Leah, drawing her by the arm to a large wardrobe, her face expanded by a wide grin of delight; "look!" she continued, pulling open the doors, "him be beautiful in dat!"

And, spread out before her eyes, she beheld a dress, the one of all others she would herself have chosen—white, the purest tarlatane, with a band and long ends of black; it was simple, and perfectly in keeping with her age and position; for she had, with difficulty, half acceded to the wish of Mrs. Adair, that at this ball she should take leave of her mourning, which she had hitherto worn.

This was another of Angelina's covert ways of grieving her to which she urged her mother, in seeming kindness to the "poor girl, who looks so melancholy in her mourning; it must constantly remind her of her loss!" She well knew that respect to the dead is our greatest comfort, and hallows our sorrow!

Leah's act was a reproach to Mariam for her apathy, in giving up a point she should have clung to; she felt it as such, and, far more, she felt the delicacy and affection of the woman who had, unknown to all, accomplished her dearest wishes; she could not speak, but, turning to that really black neck, she threw her arms around it and sobbed, though not a tear came; her heart was bursting with self-reproaches, for accusing Heaven of her loneliness, when she possessed so true a friend.

"Him not cry—him not cry!" sobbed Leah herself, hugging her to her bosom. "Poor dear Massa Lincum" (as she called it), "not dead one year, and them make she put on colours and flowers! not while Leah there to pull 'em off again! Him not cry! Leah put by the green thing, and then Missy Adair run mad when 'im see de white gound! Not say nuffin now; hold him tongue—him dumb!"

This was one of Leah's methods of defeating Angelina's plots to annoy, and yet so quietly done that nothing could be said against it.

If we would only keep a ledger of "debtor and creditor," and balance this from to time, we should more than ever feel the justice and love of Heaven, whose balance is so beautifully poised, that our annoyances would seldom or never, unless by some error or impatience on our own part, exceed our triumphs and joys; and had we not the former to remind us of our dependence on a higher power, of the mere poverty of our unassisted humanity, what vain, egotistical, selfish, and worthless creatures we should be, especially if *all* prospered with us, and only praise sounded in our ears! The most unpleasant things in the world from home, sweet home, are home truths; but what an infinity of good they do us! How they teach us our proper level in this pilgrimage over shifting sand, which offers no stable footing.

This preface is to prepare the reader for the fact, that when the evening of Mariam's first ball arrived, which was at the house of Mrs. Bruce, before mentioned in these pages, nothing but triumphs seemed to await her footsteps. Leah's thoughtfulness about the half-mourning dress, as we before observed, was a reproach to her for her own apathy, in having, even for peace' sake, consented to throw off her tribute to a father's memory; for, without offending any one, she might have firmly refused to go out otherwise dressed. To the palace 'twas different—there she put on a costume of ceremony; but at times she had all a Creole's apathetic nature. It will be observed by our readers, that even Angelina had been forced to acknowledge her as a woman, not a child to treat with tyranny; the weapons she was obliged to arm herself with against Mariam were those of sarcasm and envy, under the guise of good-nature.

It was with a dark scowl crossing her livid brow that Angelina received Mariam's quiet thanks for the odious green dress, with the remark—

"But I think it too womanish for me."

"You do not consider yourself a child when it requires a will of your own to be ungrateful and unladylike," sneered the other, glaring on her with her green eyes.

"I am not conscious how I am ungrateful, Miss Adair," was the tranquil reply.

"After my troubling myself to have that dress made to please and surprise you!"

"I am indeed a merely cold girl of the world in offering my thanks," said Mariam, fixing her full glance on the other's face; "whereas, we should be ardent, generous children in our heartfelt expressions to those who are so anxious about us. Pray, let your kind intentions towards me be their best reward, I am so poor in language."

Angelina felt every word was sarcastically meant, though so gently spoken.

How we hate to see our ugly thoughts and deeds reflected in another's glass!

"What dress *are* you going to wear?" asked Mrs. Adair, who entered during the discussion.

"Something absurd, depend upon it, madam," said Angelina, "unless you superintend it; perhaps Miss Lincoln may submit to *your* counsels."

"Let me keep my secret, dear Mrs. Adair," asked Mariam, smiling; "I am sure you will like my dress!"

"*I* shall assuredly not go if it be anything extraordinary," said Angelina, haughtily. "Possibly Miss Lincoln intends favouring us with some native costume, one she may feel more at ease in, than when in our, perhaps civilized, but less *attracting*, dresses!"

Mariam felt the bolt, but smiled over the wound; she was learning self-control, and that difficult lesson, internal but unshown suffering.

"Now, the Bayadere's is an advantageous dress to those who like exhibiting themselves; whatever you choose, I trust you will, as I before stated, feel more at ease in it than you were at

St. James's. I never felt so embarrassed in my life as at all the observations and ill-concealed mirth around us."

"I thought," answered Mariam, looking sternly in Angelina's face, "that Miss Adair told me no girl could call herself fitted for society until after her reception at Court? If, then, Court be the place you represent it, one of loudly rude observations and vulgar mirth, I grieve, indeed, for my dear father's sake, that his child should have made a *début* into society under such bad auspices! And, for the future, I will learn to blush for myself, to save my friends their painful embarrassment on my account."

And, rising, she quitted the room, with her proud, languid step. It took much to rouse her energy; but once it struggled to life, it was as a giant. She ascended the stairs calmly, she even spoke to some one, yet she scarcely remembered whom, as she did so; but once in her room, the door closed, and only Leah there, all her Oriental fire burst forth, the passion, which no one had ever curbed; for even her mother, with excellent common sense, had a nature to subdue which, unchecked in herself, lived anew in her child.

This was Mariam's worst defect—ungovernable rage, rage which for the moment could kill; and the girl, all patience beneath the galling wounds inflicted upon her before her tormentors, now tore off the ligatures which bound those wounds, and stood almost in frenzy, as the mad blood streamed forth—there, more than in anything else, she was the Oriental woman of twenty, not the English girl of sixteen.

"Leah!" she cried in a suffocating tone, "Leah, give me air—air, girl! Don't you see I am choking,—Leah! water—girl, water!" and like a manaic the quick step strode through the room, the small hand grasped the masses of thick curls, and compressed them in one knot behind the head, as though they pressed on her brain. Leah knew her well; she did not utter a word, but silently opened the window, and placed herself before it, lest the madness of a moment might tempt the ungoverned spirit to suicide. For some minutes, which were as

hours, she paced that room in utter silence but for the deep sighs which burst from her breast. At last Leah approached, and gently encircling her with one arm, placed a glass of water to her lips. Mariam stopped, and shuddered like one awakened suddenly from somnambulism.

"Drink, missy," whispered the girl.

Mariam's eyes were haggard, and glazed almost to blindness.

"Drink, missy, dear," whispered Leah again, drawing her gently towards her, at the same time dropping on a seat. "Him wery bad—him worried—come to poor black girl's heart—she lub him well!"

The spell was broken. A storm of tears fell over Leah's neck as Mariam nestled there. It was, indeed, as a storm—for it came, and was gone. And the girl, dropping on her knees, raised her trembling hands to Heaven, and prayed so earnestly for patience to bear, and pardon for her great fault.

"It is so ugly a sin!" she uttered, in contrition and humility. "Oh, good Heaven, teach me to overcome myself, and then none may have power so to afflict me! Heaven help me!—Heaven help me!"

And now, when Leah clasped her to her bosom, her tears were gentle and soft as summer rain in sunshine.

* * * * *

When the evening of the ball arrived, and Mariam descended to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Adair and Angelina were both already awaiting her, who, in the calm, gliding figure, might know the girl of intense passion whom we have just portrayed? Assuredly, we have two natures given us—an evil to conquer, or be conquered by—a good one to crown our efforts, if we fight a brave fight.

Mrs. Adair insisted upon knowing what dress Marian would wear; and though she at first opposed the half-mourning, Richard was present, who upheld Mariam's wish as just and natural, and now she stood before the enraged Angelina so simply dressed, and beautiful in her natural grace, that the

choking throat had not power to obey the heart's desire, and fling forth its malignant disappointment.

"If Miss Lincoln be quite ready," she uttered at last, hastily rising, "we should do well to go, madam!"

"I hope I have not detained you," said Mariam quietly. "Eleven was the hour you named; it is not more than half-past ten."

"How I detest the bad taste of scrupulous exactness in dates and hours!" muttered Angelina to her mother, in an audible whisper. "It is so perfectly *parvenu*."

And the amiable lady sailed out of the room after her mother.

Mariam looked beautiful as she entered Mrs. Bruce's rooms, already crowded, her rich, glossy curls nearly touching the tender waist—the olive cheek even was tinted—the European blood had gained the ascendant—the rigidity of the face had relaxed—and a smile lit up the whole, for she met Richard at the door, and he had composedly drawn her arm under his own, with a—"How nice you look; I thought they were going to make a green parrot of you—a pretty poll from Timbuctoo, with red feathers on your head!"

"And one sentence in my vocabulary, 'How d'ye do?'"—and she smiled. "And by the way, Richard, how *do* you do?—for one seldom sees you."

"I have been much engaged lately," he replied, and a shade and a blush flitted over his cheek as if pursuing one another, the latter a spirit evoked by a regret the former betokened. "I should like to dance the first dance with you if I might, and were I not engaged," he quickly added. "But the truth is, Marie" (he used his pet abbreviation), "there is a little girl here who feels out of her place, my late tutor's daughter, and I have asked her to dance, to put her a little at ease."

"That's very kind of you, and quite right," she replied, smiling. "Will you introduce her to me? Poor girl! I pity her if she feels lonely."

"You're a good little soul," he replied, looking in the glowing face raised to his; "but——"

"But what?" And she smiled playfully.

"Oh, nothing. I was thinking of something else. Perhaps so, if I have an opportunity, that is——"

He was evidently confused. Mariam saw it, and was silent.

By this time they were in a crowd, out of which rose from time to time, as they passed on, the sentences, "What a beautiful girl!" "What a glorious brunette!" "Who is she?" "She must be Spanish!" And not one uttered, "That black girl."

This was Heaven's just balance, to soothe an afflicted, too susceptible child.

Mariam was radiant, because Richard Adair heard all; for she knew Angelina had reported to him the palace phrases.

How very vain we grow when there is some one to prize our beauty, whom we should like to look and laugh upon, like stars, or night flowers with bright and holy lustre!

CHAPTER X.

"WHO's that Richard is dancing with?" asked Mrs. Adair of the ball-giver, Mrs. Bruce, raising her *lorgnon* (she was really shortsighted), as these two ladies sat side by side.

"Oh! only Miss Bateman; don't you remember your son's tutor's daughter? My husband (you know he's always doing something very disagreeable) must needs invite her this evening, because, he says, she is so pretty and unobtrusive."

"I dislike your unobtrusive girls; there's always cunning in them. It is so natural for a girl to like showing herself, that those who affect the contrary *must* be deceitful!" was the charitable reply.

"But Bruce never sees or does things like any one else; and, because he says this Mr. Bateman has advanced our Charles so much in his studies, he must needs ask them here to-night. If the girl were not so pretty, they might pass unnoticed; but I certainly should not like it said that my son's tutor and his daughter had been my invited guests. It looks like going into the highways to fill your rooms! Such people are very well in their places!"

"Quite right, my dear, and I certainly don't think Richard had any occasion to ask her to dance. Men are really so very stupid—they have not the tact of women! Merely because I allowed her father to take her for a year to the Grange with Richard and himself, the boy thinks he must keep up the acquaintance. He should have cut her long ago!"

"Cut whom?" asked Elton, coming up, with his usual blunt inquisitiveness.

"Oh, nobody!" answered Mrs. Adair, colouring.

"Not me, I hope?" he persisted. "A strong cord unites us, my dear Mrs. Adair, despite our little differences sometimes;

you must have a sharp knife to sever it." And he dropped into a vacant chair.

The two ladies exchanged glances of annoyance.

"I always like to find you two out," he continued, with bland good-humour; "one hears so many useful and worth-preserving remarks, not like the general run of ladies' conversation. But, whom are you wishing to cut off your list?"

"Oh, nobody!" answered Mrs. Adair, peevishly; "she is not, thank goodness, upon it!"

"Is it not very ridiculous of Mr. Adair opening the ball with Miss Bateman?" asked Mrs. Bruce, deprecatingly.

"Has he done so?—Where?" and Elton looked towards the couple, smiling pleasantly on one another in a quadrille.

"Oh, now I understand! He ought to cut the acquaintance of his playfellow of a whole year of seclusion at the Grange."

"She only accompanied her father, my son's tutor," said Mrs. Adair, haughtily.

"True, but you desired it—to refine his mind, you said. If she were capable of doing so as a child, I should think she might make a doubly beneficial impression on the man."

"Perhaps that is her aim," suggested Mrs. Bruce, with a significant nod towards the criminal, Kate Bateman, all smiles, and yet so innocently glad.

"You're a funny woman," said Elton, bluntly, to Mrs. Adair. "You made a complete game of cup-and-ball of these two; you attach them to one another like the toy I speak of, and then, when you have flung him in the air, you are quite surprised to see the silken cord draw them together again."

"How d'ye do, Elton," cried a jovial-looking man, coming up. "I say, do you see poor Bateman's daughter, how happy she looks? By Jove, I'm so glad I asked her! Poor girl! I daresay she don't go out much;" and the offending and disagreeable Mr. Bruce rubbed his hands.

"I think her sadly out of her place!" said Mrs. Adair, coldly.

"Bless my soul! Why?"

"Why? because she's only the daughter of your son's tutor!"

"Quite right and just!" replied Elton, with mock seriousness, before the other could reply. "For, assuredly, the man who devotes himself to make gentlemen of youths, who would otherwise be uncouth cubs, *cannot*, either he, or his daughter, be fit society for the parents and friends of those very youths!"

The ladies looked thunderbolts at Elton.

"Capital! excellent!" laughed Bruce. "Come along, Elton, let's go and look round." And the congenial friends walked off arm-in-arm.

"I declare my husband is a perfect ruffian!" gasped Mrs. Bruce.

"And Elton a bear!" was the reply.

"Between ourselves, Bruce," whispered Elton, "I think your wife and Mrs. Adair the two most prejudiced, narrow-minded women I know."

"My dear fellow, two such women's tongues are enough to breed a plague from their pestilential words!"

"I thank Heaven I am a bachelor; my dear Bruce, I pity you from my soul."

"Thank you, my dear fellow, indeed you may."

* * * * *

"Richard, how absent you are!" said Kate, looking in his face, and trying to catch the eyes which were wandering everywhere. "Are you seeking any one?"

"Who? I, Kate? No, no one; that is, I was wondering who my sister was talking so seriously to, on that sofa."

"Don't you know that is the young clergyman of St. ——, Mr. Narcissus Browne; he is a great pet with the ladies."

"Not for his beauty, I presume."

"He's considered very interesting; but I do declare, Richard, you are seeking some one, for you are still searching through the rooms."

"Folly, Kate! jealousy," he whispered, and the soft dark eyes bent down upon her, beneath their long lashes.

"I don't think I ever saw Miss Lincoln look so handsome as to-night," said Kate, after a figure gone through.

"Where do you see her?" he asked hastily, and the eyes lit up.

"There," answered the girl, looking in his face, half averted from her, with a pained look, "to the left; but then, 'tis true, I only have seen her in her walking-dress until this evening; she's very handsome, her Eastern complexion gives so much richness to her beauty;" and she stifled a sigh.

Richard looked silently at Mariam some moments; she was dancing with a very gentlemanly-looking young man, with whom she was conversing with evident satisfaction.

"I disagree with you," said Richard, after a long survey; "I think I never saw Miss Lincoln looking worse in my life, and her dress is the last she should have put on, with her olive skin."

"I thought her dress simple and pretty."

"Well, perhaps I'm no judge," he hastily replied, and then added sarcastically, "possibly, too, you admire the manner she is conducting herself? One knows no one! I thought her a most retiring girl, and she is positively flirting and free to an unpleasant extent."

Kate made no reply, but she sighed as she looked down. Women are rarely deceived, when the heart watches one they fear.

Richard was almost silent the remainder of the quadrille.

A change had come over the spirit of Angelina's dream. Somehow she had not failed to notice that few men *voluntarily* invited her to dance. Her self-love solved the enigma: she was so superior in intellect and education to most, that they were envious of her! Now, though she lived much among the dead and the grandeur of their languages, she had not the slightest objection to a living lover, and his small talk.

Before Mariam came, some few invited her to dance, from the

policy which makes a man look forward to invitations to nice houses, but even she saw it was mere obligation on their part—not one ever asked her a second time; and when she was positively engaged, and her partner standing beside her, drawing on his gloves like a lamb decking itself with garlands for some holocaust, half a dozen were sure to rush up and invite her! These are startling facts, which force us to open our eyes. For her, there were no snug little corners sought for a quiet *chat*—no inhaling a breath of sweet air under a damask curtain at an open window, the moon beaming down on a happy face as it looks upon you! No; her partners walked through the dance, gave her an ice which their manner might have created without Gunter's intervention, and then they trotted her to her mother's wing!

So thus the change came over the spirit of her dream, and she resolved to eschew dancing; for, from Mariam's success this evening, she too well saw, with bitterness of spirit, that the men—wretches that they are!—would transfer their invitations to this girl, and deem the compliment (a pleasure) paid to one in the family, quite enough.

There is a body of men in the rear of Life's Army, men of peace, seeking their glory above this earth, and these men, by a strange misnomer, are called "militant," and these peaceful bodies are the forlorn hope of most ladies who fail in this world in creating a *grande passion*, or any *passion* at all; and these they fall back upon for consolation, and not always of a spiritual kind: there are the loaves and fishes of married life, the crusts are to be shared together in perspective. Clergymen must naturally possess more of the cardinal virtues than other men, and in charity bestow in alms, on those craving their regard, some kindness in return!

Angelina had girded herself for the fight, with many another young and ancient lady, for the affections of Narcissus Browne; and he (was it to make them more eager for the fray?) had given out positively that he never intended marrying—that he thought a young man should first make himself a perfect master in theology before dreaming of such an event—and who could

study with a wife and a dozen children? Besides, this "notice to the public" gave him much more freedom in his intercourse with families than if he had been looked upon as a marrying man. What his private intentions might be—what he might be ultimately tempted to do—and what all the young ladies intended he *should* do—are things at present hidden from our view.

Beside him Angelina sat, talking as she alone could talk, and Narcissus listened, or seemed to do so, attentively; but a quiet observer might have noticed that his eyes stole furtive glances round that gay room—at whom? He alone knew if at one, or all.

* * * * *

"Dearest Kate," whispered Adair, tenderly pressing the hand which rested on his arm as they stood in one of those quiet corridor corners, only found in houses thrown open for a ball, and through which other couples quickly pass with furtive glances, a kind of *esprit de corps* custom, not to be inquisitive, lest they themselves should some day need the like charity.

"Dearest Kate, indeed you are wrong. I sincerely pity Mariam Lincoln. I love her as a dear sister—she is amiable, and little appreciated; but love her—no, decidedly not. In the first place, my fortune is insufficiently large to permit me, in delicacy, to seek an heiress. I'm a deucedly proud fellow, and then——"

"But," she interrupted, "you seemed so much annoyed at her dancing so often with Sir Philip Montgomery; was that not the name we heard her partner called?"

"Yes; I've heard of him often, but we never met before. He has been abroad. But as to my being annoyed, you are quite mistaken; except, because I thought her manner too free, and as my mother's ward——"

"True; but she appears very retiring to me."

"Girls are no judges," he hastily answered. "But let us leave her to her pleasures—confound the girl—and think of

ourselves. I'm always happy with you beside me; that you well know."

"I've thought so, Richard; but it makes me sad. Where can it terminate? Your mother never would——"

"Leave care alone!" he quickly interrupted, and a half-frown crossed his brow, "and let us enjoy the present—'tis my maxim. It was very kind of old Bruce to think of inviting you here!"

"He is very good-natured, more especially since my poor father's sight has become so affected as to render his duties almost impossible towards young Mr. Bruce." A rapid sigh struggled upwards, quivering her lips.

"Don't sigh, Katty dear, or *I* shall be jealous."

"*You*, Richard! you would have little cause. I was thinking if my poor father should lose his sight."

"Away with such gloomy thoughts! The oculist he visited did not seem to anticipate anything so dreadful, did he?"

"He said little, but looked very grave."

"Here you both are!" exclaimed Mr. Bruce, coming up, followed by a gentleman.

"I have brought you a partner, my dear" (to Kate). "I told him he should dance with the prettiest girl in my house to-night."

As he spoke, he turned round towards his companion, Sir Philip Montgomery.

Kate coloured painfully, and looked up in Adair's face. The look asked—"Am I not engaged to you?" But his eye did not meet hers—it was fixed upon Sir Philip, and something very like satisfaction crossed his brow.

The introduction took place, and Kate, most unwillingly, quitted Adair's arm for that of another, and Bruce and Adair walked off arm-in-arm.

"I knew you'd be glad to get away," said Bruce, good-naturedly; "for though she's a sweet, pretty girl—yet, you know, after all, brought up together, as one may say, she is more like a sister to you than anything else."

"Quite true," answered his companion, absently. He was thinking: "I wonder where Mariam is?"

Mariam was quietly seated on a sofa with Elton, who was just saying,—

"I know you fear and dislike me;—you think me horribly sarcastic and ill-natured, don't you?"

"I cannot understand you, that's all."

"Try and do so. I'm a very candid body, but not a bad one, I hope. I endeavour to lead or advise those worth interesting one's self about. I like you, though you have several faults."

"Thank you, Mr. Elton," and she laughed.

"I never flatter. You are passionate, and a little self-willed."

"You have never seen me in a passion?"

"Never, but I have seen the unmistakable traces — the quivering lip, eye fearful of looking up, lest its glance should destroy—humanized lightning in it. And then the sudden quitting of a room, the return with haggard looks, and paled cheeks and lips."

"You have watched me narrowly, it would seem, Mr. Elton." And she looked fixedly at him.

"Now, don't run away with the ridiculous idea that I am in love with you."

She coloured painfully.

"I see the *fear* was in your mind. Now, listen to me—there —don't turn down your eyes, like putting an extinguisher on a waxlight. I am not going to make a confession to you, beginning with a sigh, and 'I *once* loved!' For that *once* never, thank Heaven, existed for me! Had it, I make no doubt it would have terminated with me as with almost all the rest of mankind, in becoming that morbid, sheepy thing, gregarious in its nature, where the love of one woman, instead of dying an unit, as it should do, begets and crowds, huddles, pens up fifty more into the space of a man's life, at the end of which he probably finds that he was equally in love with all, and never having been able to choose one, dies a disagreeable, crabbed bachelor!—or, out of the fifty, overlooked forty-nine gems, to

select a piece of coloured glass! Fate has wonderfully preserved me from either rock. I never loved any woman ten minutes in my life!"

"Oh, I can believe you, Mr. Elton; you despise the sex!"

"Wrong—decidedly wrong! I look upon man as the noblest creation of heaven, *when* an upright, honest-hearted fellow,—woman, as the most finely wrought, chaste and beautiful, *when* not merely woman in name; she is the exquisite setting round a diamond, man the gem, which requires a deuced deal of polishing to make anything of it, and then there is generally a flaw in some of the facets."

Mariam laughed. "What do you mean to express by this——"

He interrupted—"long-winded oration?—Why, simply this—I like you: don't fear me. I *never* shall be in love. I pity you, for a mere child in years, by education and habits abroad, you are a thoughtful, sensitive woman; everything startles or galls you. Let *me* sometimes claim a friend's privilege, and guide you. I pity your loneliness. Will you promise me?"

She looked up hesitatingly in his face.

"Say you will. You have many rocks to steer over before you find a safe anchorage. The sea has just drifted back, and discovered a hitherto unseen one at your feet."

"You are very figurative to-night," she uttered, to turn the tide of his conversation, that she might not be *forced* to look upon the rock she dreaded, and feared he too had discovered—"Have you been recently wandering among the 'shells of ocean?'"

"Well evaded, Miss Lincoln! but I have said enough; some day you will perhaps——"

"Are you going to dance with Mariam, Elton?" asked Adair, laughingly, as he tapped him on the shoulder. "How deeply you were discussing something."

"The weather and ladies' dresses," was the ready answer; "and the imprudence of my friend Bruce, in throwing so pretty a girl as *poor* Kate Bateman, the tutor's daughter, in the way

of all you young men! See, there she is gliding through the dance with your admirer, Miss Lincoln, Sir Philip Montgomery."

"I disclaim any claim to that gentleman," she replied, with a self-possession evidently not unpleasing to Adair; for he caught her hand familiarly, and, raising her gently from her seat, drew the little white-kidded fingers under his arm.

"Come and dance with me, Mariam," he said; "don't waste your time listening to Elton; he'll make you as gloomy and cynical as himself."

"I hope, my boy," answered the other as they moved to go, "you may ever give us as wise lessons as I have been giving; there's not a sigh at the end of one of them; they all terminate like fireworks, in a *bouquet* of light and brilliancy!"

"Saltpetre and sulphur, Elton, leaving an unpleasant odour behind! I declare Mariam looks quite grave. Come, let us have a schottische!"

"Boys and girls! boys and girls!" pondered Elton; "and what sorrowful men and women their thoughtlessness too often makes!"

"It is quite a fortunate chance to have a dance with you, Mariam," said Adair, smiling really happily upon his partner; "I thought you wedded for the evening to Sir Philip Montgomery."

"And you to Miss Bateman," was the reply.

"Where did you notice me?"

"In the last three dances; it would have been difficult not to have done so."

"By the way, you wish to be introduced to her, Mariam, after——"

"Never mind, now," she hastily answered. "We should probably never meet again; so, 'tis no use commencing an acquaintance from mere whim."

Adair's eyes lit up with a pleased look, but he said no more.

Thus terminated Mariam's first ball in England, and the little "black girl" went home happy, despite Angelina's rue

and wormwood, of which she had collected a good bundle to enliven the drive home.

Mrs. Adair dozed, yawned, and wondered, "How she could have revoked when Lord Billow was her partner! it made him quite lose his temper! it was very stupid of her!"

For some time past she had been dreaming (a day dream) how beautiful her diamonds would look set in a coronet! Lord Billow was a widower, and it is not so difficult, as some people think, to convert a partner at whist into a partner for life! "Hearts are trumps" may scientifically be conveyed on a gentle sigh into the dullest ear!

CHAPTER XI.

A MONTH passed away, a month in a London season! Oh! what a crowd of events jostle one another in four weeks of a young girl's life, during a like period. Mariam had been to balls and operas, *fêtes*, breakfasts, all, and at several she was destined to meet Kate Bateman. Mr. Bruce was, what we have endeavoured in a few words to depict him, one of the best-natured creatures in existence, one of the true old English breed, becoming, alas! nearly extinct, especially in London life. A bluff, unselfish man, never doing an ill-natured action, ever foremost to perform a kind one; and, being a rich man, he possessed a golden weight in society; but all these good qualities were—we grieve to register the fact—built on sand.

Through his intercession Kate received many invitations; she declined some, for there is nothing more expensive than society, and her poor father's labours could ill supply her many wants. Now, too, those labours were limited; for his sight, of the decline of which we have before spoken, was seriously affected, and Kate was forced to seek pupils herself; and but

for the hope of meeting Adair, she would have declined all society. But girls cannot be wise women at eighteen; she loved, and though many a bitter sigh told how little hope she *really* had of that love prospering, still hope, like all things, has a counterfeit, and she fancied herself possessed of that real anchor of life, when she said to herself, "Though Richard has never decidedly spoken of marriage, yet I am sure he loves me, and we have been children together, so that the ceremony of asking me to marry him would be absurd between us! He has a hundred times spoken of his love, sought mine; what other proof of his intentions do I require?"

But the heart said nay to all this, and true hope did not exist there. The gilding soon fell from the tinsel thing when Adair pressed her to his heart, and *only* said, "Dear Kate knows I love her, and would not lose her for the world." This was all, and thus it had been for months, and thoughtlessly, not ill done on his part. He had no intention to deceive; he really loved her; but unfortunately our own wishes, ever active but unskilful artists, too frequently give a false colouring to the thoughts of others.

They are again in the little parlour at Highgate, where we first saw them; his arm encircles her waist, and her head leans on his shoulder; but it is not as when first we looked upon them;—*then* she thought only of him as of a dear brother; now, the conscious girl blushes beneath his caresses; neither does she seem happy as then—the face was paler and a hue of care crossed the fair brow.

"How can you be so silly, Kate?" he said, rather angrily, in reply to some previous words from her. "How often must I tell you again and again that I am not in love with Miss Lincoln. I must be civil to her; besides, I like the girl, for she possesses many good and excellent qualities; but of this rest assured, I never would marry her, for one reason alone—that she is an heiress. My wife must not enrich me; and what with my confounded ill-luck lately on the Turf, and in other ways, I am afraid to look into my affairs."

"Why not give it up, dear Richard? Why, if you love me, cannot that love suffice to make you happy?"

"Why?—why?" and something very like a sigh from the heart drove a cloud in witness across his brow. "Oh! a man," he hastily added, answering himself, "cannot always be present, even with one he loves; and then I am devoted to the Turf. I like the excitement; it amuses, engrosses me, and drives away annoyances."

"Let me share your cares—it will lighten them."

He looked down fixedly and sadly on the face on his shoulder. "Poor Kate!" he said, after a pause, "there may be things you, of all others, could not partake with me. Come," he said, changing his tone, "don't let us be so dull; we don't often pass a quiet evening like this alone—let us take advantage of it."

"Is it true?" she asked, sitting upright and looking at him, "that Sir Philip Montgomery has proposed to Miss Lincoln, and been refused?"

"I really think you must do it to annoy me," he said, springing up and hurrying to the window, "always speaking about that girl. Pray, choose some other subject; I'm perfectly ignorant about it, and indifferent as to whether she has or has not refused him. I only know that last night, at Lady Milton's, she scarcely danced with anyone else."

"Dearest Richard," she exclaimed, following him and seizing his half-reluctant hand, "don't be angry. Indeed I spoke of her, as you assured me you were indifferent to her actions. I did not mean to offend or grieve you; pray, pardon me."

"It is your own fault, Kate; you have worried me so much about the girl, that I am irritable when you name her."

"I won't speak of her again."

"Forgive me, Kate," he said, gently leading her to the sofa where they had been seated. "I am a cross fellow; but many things are teazing me, and I look to you for comfort, not annoyance."

Reconciliations are dangerous at all times where two love, and only one quite honestly. Adair had been led by his

mother's folly into so great an intimacy with Kate, that a boy's liking had gradually ripened into affection, and that on so very intimate a footing, that the girl permitted much which the child had been used to. Marriage with her never once entered his mind; he did not love her exclusively enough for that; he never asked himself any questions about her, but naturally, as when a boy, if annoyed, he flew to her for comfort, blind comfort on her part—for he could not lay bare his heart to her; he scarcely acknowledged to himself all its wishes, and the stern resolve not to seek their accomplishment. Like too many, he followed on—on, leaving time and fate to lead him at will.

"I have often thought," he whispered, after a pause, "of putting your love for me to the test, Kate: women profess love so readily, and so few understand it."

"How do you comprehend it, Richard?"

"Love has an altar," he added; "on all altars there should be sacrifices offered up to the deity of the spot."

"But not *living* ones now: I will not try to read your meaning further," and the girl trembled.

"What offering is there in marriage?" he said bitterly; evidently he was suffering mentally, from some hidden cause. "You say you love me; *that* would be no sacrifice."

"Oh!" she cried, moving gently from his encircling arm, "I will not feign blindness, or ignorance; but you cannot be serious, you cannot ask me to become that living holocaust, which no fire would consume to ashes, or rather an eternal and ever-glowing one would—the fire of remorse, which peoples the crowded streets with reckless, profane, lost creatures, once pure and holy images of Heaven's creation. Oh, Richard! say you were trying me—say you were!" and the girl clung to his hand sobbing, but tearless.

"These are women's notions," he replied, trying once again to encircle her waist; but she shrank from him, whilst the dilated eyeballs were fixed in terror.

The poor girl evidently feared for herself and her resolution, from a dread of creating in his mind a doubt of her love.

"Mere women's notions," he continued, "instilled into their minds at nurse, sucked in with mother's milk. Leave off that diet, Kate! You are a woman now; you love me—you say you do. I love you—*that* you know. Now, at present, I can make no promise of marriage; besides, I am exacting—I want love's sacrifice. Come, Kate, let us leave this hateful town; I am sick of England. I shall be off in a week or so abroad. Come with me; if you love me, you will."

"And leave my father? my poor father? *now* less than ever, Richard, for he is nearly blind," and the unweeping girl trembled violently, the pale lips quivered over the chattering teeth; the trial was severe.

"I see what it is. You fear my honour; you fear that I should desert you, to bring you to the fate of those you have so vividly painted. Fear not, Kate, whilst I have life, mine you shall be. Your father shall be cared for in all things, and some day he may learn to pardon us, for he knows I cannot marry without seriously injuring my future prospects, unless my mother consented, and to this *now* she never would."

"I know that, Richard; but—but,"—she whispered, "she need not know it yet."

"A private marriage!" he exclaimed, laughing. "Oh! the times of romance are gone by. If you really loved me, you would be less cautious; but 'tis better thus. I will go alone, and you will make some good marriage, I have no doubt; you are pretty enough for anything;" and he rose and walked to the table, where his hat and gloves lay. Quietly taking out his watch, he exclaimed, "I must be off; I have an appointment at my club about my horses; I am selling off my stud before I go."

She was leaning over the arm of the sofa, her throbbing head buried in her hands; the words "before I go" fell on her ears.

"Richard," she cried, springing towards him. "Don't leave me so coldly! feel for, and pity me. I *do* love you, and, were it only myself, I would say, as I feel, that on your honour and

affection in all things, I could rely in peace; but, my father—my poor father! what would he be without me?"

Adair's face worked painfully as she looked up in it; the demon fled, the man was himself again—wayward, but not bad.

"Kate, forgive me!" he cried at last. "I was nearly playing the part of a cold-hearted villain—forgive me!" and he drew her gently to his bosom. "Sister you have been to me; as a brother I once loved you, until my own wayward passions tempted me to seek your ruin; for passions there were, *more* than you dream of, and not all in ungoverned feelings towards yourself. Do not fear me now; no, as Heaven hears me, I would not injure you! Pardon me, and may Heaven pardon my mother for throwing us together as she has done, forgetting our human hearts, and wilful and vile affections." His voice was trembling with agitation.

"Thank you, Richard, thank you," she whispered; and now the hitherto frozen tears fell down. "I know you were but trying me; you know my deep affection for you; it has grown upwards to my womanhood from child's liking; and you will not go—you will not quit England; I should be so lost without seeing you!"

"No, dearest Kate—no; I scarcely know what I said or meant. Remember only this, that I love you well, but not madly enough to have blinded my reason and honour, as I was nigh doing. Remember this, if I ever play the villain again—and now forget and pardon me. I will see you soon. God bless you!"

"You will return soon—very soon—Richard, will you not?" she asked, smiling through her tears, and forgetting the danger she had just escaped.

"Yes, in a day or two! Good-bye, Kate, darling; now, don't be sad or fret," and, kissing the upturned face to his, he left the cottage, and rode slowly homeward, thinking of—another!

CHAPTER XII.

KATE'S reverie after Adair's departure was interrupted by the return of her father from town. Bateman had always possessed a quiet, placid manner, which was now doubly such from the blindness creeping over him. Who has not noticed the almost unbroken calm on a face where the eyes lend nothing to disturb it by the outward and distracting thoughts they momentarily call forth upon its surface? And Bateman's was particularly placid, for by nature he possessed a "take it easy" disposition; now, too, there was something sorrowful in the countenance.

"Dear father!" cried Kate, running to meet him, as he rang at the outer gate. "You are tired, are you not? you look so: surely you have ridden home?"

"No, dear Kate," he whispered, mysteriously glancing round with his imperfect vision, from beneath a large green shade, as if fearful of being overheard; "you know we must learn to economize every farthing now. I got home very well with the aid of my stick."

By this time they were in the passage, and she had taken off his hat, and hung it up on the rack, before entering their room, for they were only lodgers in this humble cottage.

"And what does the oculist say to you to-day, father?" she asked, when they were seated.

"Oh, Mr. Gray gives me no very cheering prospect, Kate! The sight of the left eye is quite gone—the right partially so; but he says he cannot operate upon them until I am quite blind, or the cure would fail."

"A sad prospect, indeed!" And she sighed heavily.

"But he was very kind," continued he; "and refused any fee as usual, saying in his peculiarly abrupt manner, which

startles one so much at first, until you become accustomed to it —'Put up your money; I dare say you have not thousands—tutors seldom have—and you will require a good sum for your operation.' So I asked him what it would cost, and he replied hastily, 'Forty pounds to you, and remember I shall expect to be paid.'"

"Forty pounds, father!" she cried. "Heaven help us! How are we to obtain that?—it seems very cruel in a man speaking so harshly in such a case."

"So I thought at the moment, Kate; but when I considered about it coming home, I came to this decision, that in such vital cases as those where an oculist is called in, if he were to be too gentle and easy, there are many foolish persons, women especially, as in tooth-drawing for instance, who would fidget about, and try to appear much more alarmed than they in reality were; but where a man startles and awes you by his energetic manner, depend upon it people are afraid to move, and this, combined with his great skill, may account for the wonderful cures he has performed."

"Perhaps so; and was that all he said?"

"He told me I must live generously to keep up my strength, drink plenty of wine, and avoid all study. And how can either be done? For study is life for both of us, though I can do little now."

"Is it not strange, dear father, that physicians all seem to forget the possible poverty of their patients, and prescribe wine as if it were water; and yet, in certain cases, 'tis life itself. But do they ever ask, 'Can you afford it?'"

"No, I believe not; and 'tis the stranger, because my experience has taught me that medical men are by far the most feeling, kind-hearted of God's creatures—probably from knowing, anatomically, the sufferings which must be endured in many cases, mysterious to all eyes on earth but theirs."

"And Mr. Grey has the reputation of one of the most generous," said Kate. She was thinking of the seemingly cruel and grasping demand of forty pounds to a poor blind tutor.

"From thence," continued Bateman, "I called upon Mr. Bruce and told him, however great my regret, I was forced for awhile—I hoped not for very long—to relinquish the care of his son's education, finding myself quite unable to retain him as a pupil conscientiously. How direct studies, when you cannot discern even the letters clearly?"

And the man's voice trembled with emotion—he had so many fears torturing his heart.

"And what do you think he said?" inquired he, after a moment's silence to overcome himself. He did not await her reply, but continued—"Why, he wished me—tried to force me to come as usual. 'I could surely talk to his boy,' he said—'if blind, I wasn't dumb;' but I saw through the kind-heartedness of the wish, his very bluntness proved his feeling. He did not wish it to appear as a favour, for he put it in this manner—'that his boy would lose the ground now acquired with a new master.' But I could not do it, Kate. I am proud; though so poor, I must honestly earn what I receive; so I declined positively, saying the excitement even of teaching was forbidden me."

"Right, dear father—quite right!" And a faint blush of mingled pride and poverty rose on Kate's cheek. "You could not have conscientiously done otherwise; but do not worry or fret, we shall manage very well. I will endeavour to obtain pupils, and shall certainly succeed in doing so; hitherto, you would not hear of it, wishing me to study my painting. Then, too, I will endeavour to dispose of some sketches. We shall manage all, dear father—only keep up your spirits for Katty's sake."

And, rising, she fondly embraced her parent, from whose darkened eyes oozed tears of love for this dear comforter in his affliction.

"But he would force a twenty-pound note upon me," he said, after awhile, "though he did not owe me half, and bade me purchase something for you, my dear child, as a remembrance from himself, and he said he should come and see us soon."

"Dear, kind Mr. Bruce!" she exclaimed, with feeling; "but we will hoard up the twenty pounds. Why, it is half of the forty!"

"Put it away, then, my Kate; here it is," and he put his hand in a side-pocket to seek for it. Alas! it was gone! After an anxious search, during which the girl's face gradually became paler and paler from fear, his hands dropped powerless, nerveless by his side, when the cruel truth flashed upon him; then the trembling hand pushed back the green shade, leaving the darkened eyes exposed to view, as if it needed only the full light of day to give sight to his darkness, and thought to his wearied mind, lost in conjecturing how he could have mislaid it. It needed all her love to soothe and comfort him under this heavy affliction; for the sum really due to him they had both been reckoning upon for absolute necessaries, and the loss was indeed severe. He had either in his blindness placed it so that it had fallen out of his pocket, or, more probably, partially exposed to view, had thus tempted the cupidity of some passer-by. Be it as it may, it was irrecoverably gone.

"Never mind, dearest father," she said at last, drawing down the shade over his straining eyeballs; "let us bow resigned to Heaven's will. Do not think of it; we can settle all without it—leave that to me;" and taking his hand in both of hers, she smilingly asked (though the smile was a grimace), "and who else did you see in town?"

"No one, darling—stop, though, as I was slowly plodding homewards I heard my name called out, and then a horseman drew up to the footpath; of course you can guess, Kate, who it was."

"Mr. Adair," she uttered, tremblingly.

"And why not Richard?" he asked, hastily. "You always used to call him so; I do not think it grateful on your part to raise a barrier of formality between yourself and one who has been like a brother to you."

"I did not intend to do so," she almost whispered; "but I

hear him called so by every one, and, in society, of course I must not say Richard."

"Perhaps you are right. Well, I met him and another gentleman; I knew the voice, I think, though I could not distinguish him well. It seems he and Richard had that moment met accidentally on the hill, for the latter said to him, after both had spoken to me, and inquired about my poor sight—'By the way, what brings you up here in this neighbourhood, and on horseback, too?' To which the other replied —'Oh, I have been escorting Miss Lincoln across the heath!' Do you know, Kate, child," said he, changing his tone, and ponderingly, as if stricken by a sudden idea, "I fancy Richard is in love with Miss Lincoln; I always thought it would be a match, for I have noticed how he, unobserved by her, watched every movement." Here he sighed over the days when he could watch with clear vision; and she, poor girl, sighed heavily over the almost confirmation of her own fears.

"Yes," he continued, "he always watched and sought her; I noticed this whenever I called there. Well, when his friend spoke about escorting her, he exclaimed, 'Good Heavens, why not have told me at once that she was in this neighbourhood! I will gallop after her! But, which way has she gone?' And he was going to turn up the hill again, when the other interrupted him by a laugh, exclaiming, 'Stop, my boy, you are too late, for on the heath we met a party of equestrians, ladies and gentlemen, and amongst them Sir Philip Montgomery; so, seeing her in so much excellent company, I knew that I was not wanted, an old, humdrum bachelor like me, so I took my leave.' 'You are very obliging,' answered Richard, sarcastically, 'to be made a convenience of by any girl.' 'Ah! my boy,' he replied, 'learn consistency, and when you swear you don't care about a girl, do not put yourself into so great a state of excitement because she happens to go out for a ride, attended by her groom and an old fellow like myself.'"

During this relation, Kate sat speechless, her hands clasped, her lips pale and cold. She could not utter a word; the whole

scene was passing before her, as her father unrolled it to her view. He did not perceive her silence; his almost sightless eyes fixed on the ground, he talked on to divert her mind from the recollection of the loss they had sustained. Much more he said of Adair's severe strictures upon Mariam's meeting Sir Philip's party, and permitting Elton—for he it was—to leave her; of it being, in all probability, an arranged thing; and finally of their riding off together, Richard under the fire of the other's bantering about Miss Lincoln.

There are things which do not break the heart, but they strain its cords so severely that harmony seems ever again impossible. Kate was a girl of quick passions, energetic acts —one to *do*—to *think* afterwards: no mother since infancy to curb her; a father—a kind loving one; but one, before his vision forsook him, blind, mentally blind to the faults, dangers, or necessities of his child, not from any want of true affection, but from natural apathy, and unfitness to be a guide to any one.

"Come now, my dear child," he said at last, "let us forget all about my unhappy loss. I feel you are thinking of it still by your silence; it was to be, so it cannot be helped. Come, rouse yourself, Kate; something will turn up, I am sure. I have endeavoured to banish it from your mind with all my news, have I not?"

"*Indeed* you have, father, and succeeded!" Any one else would have read those words by their tone, as written in blood on her heart, but he noticed nothing particular in them.

"Come, then, I am glad of that," he said heartily; "and now, dear, let me have a cup of tea, for I am very much tired."

"Directly, father," she replied absently; "I will go and see if the servant is at home, for I think I heard her go out," and she escaped.

This was only an excuse to be alone for five minutes, for her heart was bursting. She rushed to her room, and, flinging her arms on the bed, leaned her head on them and wept bitterly, until aroused by her father again calling for his tea. Spring-

ing up, she hastily bathed her swollen eyes, and descended to the little parlour, filled with grief and remorse for having in her selfish sorrow forgotten her poor parent.

CHAPTER XIII.

Our readers must not suppose that Adair was a cold-blooded deliberate seducer, from what we have depicted in the last chapter. Many a truly generous upright heart is led astray by the action upon it of some overwhelming influence, making it for the moment reckless, half mad, and willing to seek oblivion in any way. Adair had never had a kind and competent hand to guide him. Under all the false directions into which his mind had been led or permitted to stray by his mother's erroneous method of education, it would have been surprising if he had become faultless, or even approaching to it. Until Elton's return, who amongst all his mentors was capable of gaining any authority over him; who ever spoke justly or reasonably to him; and, above all, who ever endeavoured to make a good man of him by counsel? None; and when Elton came, the boy was man, moulded, knit, immovable. Still, with all his faults, he was not a deliberate villain, though in such things as he had been ready to lead Kate to he saw no moral wrong, still less sin; but he knew many had prejudices; consequently, without some strong impulse to urge him, he never would have said and implored her to act as he had done. If men would, when half blinded by passion, ask themselves, "How should I act towards a man who thus endeavoured to warp my sister's honour?" the homethrust, the ever-selfish tongue in our heart's answerings, would energetically reply, "I would kill him!" and this answer would save many a maiden's shame, spare many a heart from undying remorse, and the anxiously sought victim, for whom the altar

of sacrifice had deliberately been raised, would become as a dear sister, over whose honour man would watch as over a Heaven-given charge, appointing the stronger agents to guard and protect the weaker.

Adair had long been outrunning all prudence in his relations with that most alluring enemy, the Turf. Horses he possessed which had won with former owners; with him they were always what is called "outsiders" and "nowheres:" he had lost immensely. Being of age, Elton could no longer claim a right to inquire into his affairs, although he endeavoured to discover much which he suspected, but he knew not half. Adair had, on coming of age, property to the amount of a thousand a year; the "Grange" was his mother's for life. At first racing had been a choice, latterly a distraction from thought. Of a warm, generous temperament, he had become attached to Mariam—at first from commiseration, then, as her many charms of person and susceptibilities and peculiarities of mind and manner unfolded themselves, the man became strengthened in his affection towards this child of nature. He saw she liked him, but deemed it only gratitude for the first day's kindness towards her, as she often alluded to it; but that was all of her love for him he ever dreamed. Knowing how little she had cause for affection towards his mother and sister, he imagined it almost a struggle in her heart not to dislike him as akin to them! Oh, how self-deceiving our hearts are! Base traitors! In honest truth, we seldom discover their real treachery until too late to redeem some grievous error they have engaged us in. One or twice words of kindness—words half uttered, then recalled—had led him almost to hope; but a moment afterwards a cold explanation of them, or an evident avoidance of his society, cast him back again in more than doubt, a certainty that she cared nothing for him. And yet these two loved sincerely and all-engrossingly; but the demon which walks the earth in borrowed robes—false pride—stepped [illegible] completely between their affections as if they had never [illegible]n!

In the commencement, Adair had often jestingly called her "blackey," or made some boyish allusion to her appearance; little imagining that this was the plague-spot ever before her, from an exaggerated fear of the world's contempt for a "native girl;" "mixed blood," in all its most servile current, seemed ever tingling in whispered phrases in her ear. Angelina's envy and malignity had bred this living form of horror, stalking after her, for it was no spectre. Every gentle word of Richard's became mere pity in her idea—pity for her almost friendless state. More than once, after a ball, she heard Angelina say, "With all his faults, certainly Richard *is* kind-hearted and feeling!" and after an instant's pause she would mark her thought by adding, "How often he danced with you last night, Miss Lincoln!"

For beyond the "Miss" they had never of late advanced towards intimacy. Angelina's fiendish heart had read hers, and this was her triumph for many an annoyance of jealousy and envy towards Mariam.

On the other hand, Adair saw the almost ruin before him, and, even if assured of her affection, would perhaps have hesitated in marrying an heiress. This was the false pride, blinding his heart to the fact, that a soul, whether man or woman's, of noble generous mould, knows no joy so great as that of conferring joy. As it was, the thing was out of the question, for assuredly she tolerated him—no more, according to his idea.

We have seen how he was unconsciously led into a tacit (if we may so call it) affection for his playmate, Kate, and how this at times embarrassed him dreadfully. Love her well enough for marriage he did not; deliberately think of ruining, or calmly undertake it, he was incapable of; and yet, led on by a momentary influence, he assuredly would have taken her from virtue and home, in the mad recklessness of his heart, torn by an unreturned love for another as he thought, and unable to find rest or peace without that love.

With these influences at work, Adair laid good stepping-stones towards his own ruin. The Turf first, then dice and

post-obits, were calmly awaiting their turn to come in, and strut on the stage, where they would play their part well, in this new edition of the "Road to Ruin."

When he arrived at home, after his interview with Kate, he was rather calmer than when Bateman left him; the necessity and wish for concealment before Elton had made him control his irritation about Sir Philip.

Elton, with all his discernment, was rather at a loss about the exact position of either the heart of his late ward and godson or Mariam's.

He sometimes fancied they were equally indifferent to each other, and that a merely platonic feeling existed between them; then again, sudden capricious movements, on the one side or the other, left him more in perplexity than ever.

"If Dick is indifferent to her," he soliloquized, after parting from him on their return from Highgate, "he is the veriest 'dog in the manger' I ever beheld, for he evidently dislikes Sir Philip's attentions to her."

Adair returned home; it was eight o'clock, the usual dinner hour at his mother's. He felt little inclined to join the circle of which Mariam would be a member; he felt too indignant with her for riding in company with Sir Philip—against whom he however had nothing to say, except that which sums up all when a man is at a loss, "He's a conceited fool!"

Whether he was so, little matters. One thing certain is, he really admired Mariam, and fancied she was not quite indifferent to himself—poor mistaken wretch! He never once crossed her mind until his presence brought him before her, and then she looked upon him as a general might on an indifferently good soldier when counting his numbers—he filled up a space.

Adair, in no mood to dine, or be in any way sociable, went to his club, and there, in the dullest corner of the writing-room, sat down and penned an epistle to Kate.

"I have done wrong," he said to himself, as he mused on the [illegible]rview with her. "I do not love her—that is, not enough to

make up to her (if such things can be repaid by affection) for the loss of fame!"

So he penned the following letter:—

"DEAREST LITTLE KATE.—After my madness this afternoon, I feel a meeting between us, without a previous explanation, would be embarrassing to both—to me most painful. Katty, I was nearly playing the villain, a part I trust never to appear in, and my conscience accuses me. I know the world, morality, all condemn a stepping aside from virtue; often too, I must say it to our shame, the seducer is the severest judge and condemner, though the last who should be so.

"If there be an excuse for a dereliction from the straight path, it only is excessive love, an impossible barrier to overcome; and yet moralists tell us, I fear truly, that even these will not hold us guiltless.

"Positively I am writing a homily, and I did not intend it. The fact is, Kate, I fear I do not love you as you deserve to be loved. I fancy it is not in my nature. I could not amply repay this sacrifice, this living holocaust, of which you so feelingly spoke. I have been so closely united to you in brotherly affection, that its bands seemed to me of so elastic a nature as to be capable of any expansion, and I tried to stretch them to love. You do not love me—do you?—more than a brother? Fear me not then; the past shall never be resumed, except the happy one when you were a dear sister to me, and my lips shall never again utter the promptings of my wayward heart; for my love could not bring you honour or happiness—then it shall ever be but as a fond brother's. As such believe me, receive me, love me. "RICHARD."

Having penned this, he was perfectly satisfied with himself. Our readers will doubtless read covert love in every line; but he did not, in honesty, so intend it.

He wrote thus (oh! the sophistry of man's mind), not to wound her, by disclaiming all affection; whereas every phrase

sequently her virtue was of spontaneous growth; it had not been implanted, shielded, and cultivated; it had sprung up, but was the root well grounded? Time must prove.

Some natures, like Mariam's, of vigorous mould, give such strong root to high and noble principles, that nothing may shake or tear them thence; care and trial only give them renewed life. They are the last stronghold of the anchor, which keeps the bark from drifting out to sea in warring storms; they are inherent to the soil; nothing else would thrive there.

But we forget Kate.

"Father," she said, in a low tone, holding her head averted from even his feeble gaze. "I have been thinking seriously to-day about our position; and your unhappy loss has made me more determined in the proposition I have to make you."

"What is it, my child?" and he went on calmly sipping his tea, well assured that Kate must be right. No man was ever more easily led.

"Father, we are here so far away from town, it is fatiguing and dangerous for you; and, as we have no motive for remaining, let us at once remove."

"Remove, Kate!" and he tried to read if she really spoke seriously.

"Yes, father dear—remove. I should like it for many reasons. In the first place, you have no more pupils."

"Alas! none," he ejaculated.

"And, you well know, for awhile we shall have to struggle with difficulties. You would not like others to see these; and, by well-meant offers of alleviating them, pain and offend our pride, the stronger for our poverty.

"No, my Kate, certainly not; but of whom are you thinking? Who need know our affairs?"

"Why, of course, Mr.—I mean Richard—would."

"Surely, dear child, wherever we are he will not be in ignorance of the place?" and he looked piteously up in her face; so helpless he seemed, she was almost bursting with grief.

"I love him like my own son," almost sobbed the poor afflicted man.

"Don't let us think of that," uttered the choking girl. "Don't look back, dearest father, but forward, and pray for the day when we may all meet again in prosperity; and you—you—you"—here she paused, and, swallowing down her tears, rose and encircled his neck—"you not in darkness, but cured—think of that!" and, dropping her head on his shoulder, the bosom heaved to bursting as she held the small throat to keep down the rising storm of grief, for at every word she saw Adair's form lessening to her sight.

"Be it as you will, my Kate," he said, clasping her waist. "I daresay you are right; you always are. But, my child, where will your pleasant evenings be? I loved so much to see my pretty Kate dressed for a ball."

"I wish never to go to another!" answered a hollow voice, very unlike her usual one. "Besides, we cannot afford it now. When you are well," she added, more cheerfully, seeing how depressed he was, "I can renew my calls on the kindness of those who remembered the poor tutor's daughter. I will write to all, and say we are leaving town awhile, by the advice of your physician, until the operation shall be performed."

"But Richard—Kate? I do not care about all the others; but why to him?"

"Because, father, he, as I before said, of all others, will try to force his purse upon us."

"True, Kate—true! But what will you say to him? He must not be grieved or offended. I will not have that done, for I love him as my own; and I don't think, Kate, you like him as you once did. It is not grateful, child; it seems to me you wish lately to avoid and get rid of him." And the dim eyes tried to survey her countenance.

"You are wrong—very wrong," she uttered, almost in a whisper. "But I do not think Mrs. Adair likes the frequency of his visits here." She knew, could she arouse his pride, even this barrier would be overleaped.

sequently her virtue was of spontaneous growth; it had not been implanted, shielded, and cultivated; it had sprung up, but was the root well grounded? Time must prove.

Some natures, like Mariam's, of vigorous mould, give such strong root to high and noble principles, that nothing may shake or tear them thence; care and trial only give them renewed life. They are the last stronghold of the anchor, which keeps the bark from drifting out to sea in warring storms; they are inherent to the soil; nothing else would thrive there.

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"You are wrong—very wrong," she uttered, almost in a whisper. "But I do not think Mrs. Adair likes the frequency of his visits here." She knew, could she arouse his pride, even this barrier would be overleaped.

"And why not? Was I, were you, not fitting company for him a few years since? Did she not beg of me herself to take you to the Grange as a companion for his leisure hours? Why dislike now what she then begged for?"

The girl's delicacy forbade alike too deeply wounding his pride, or uttering a word of her heart's secret.

"I think," she said at last, "that Richard is, or will be, engaged to Miss Lincoln."

How she trembled over this even in thought! "And, as his mother much desires it, she fears Miss Lincoln's pride, which is great, may take offence at his intimacy here."

"I see what you mean. You are quite right—always right, Kate, dear! So be it for awhile. I leave all to you. When shall we move?"

"Soon—very soon. Perhaps to-morrow. I will go to town early. And—and—should Richard come"—this she said hastily—"whilst I am absent, be silent, will you not? It would degrade us more in our poverty were he to know it, or his mother accuse us wrongfully."

"Rely upon me, I will be silent."

Little more was said. Like a child, the new plan seemed at last almost to please him—it was novelty.

He shortly afterwards retired to rest, fatigued by the toil and annoyances of the day. Kate had fought a strong fight—especially for her. Alas! it was not all for virtue's sake; but pride had a good share. The thought of Mariam maddened her, and in flight she hoped to pain, and perhaps recall, Adair, without asking herself to what purpose. She was all contradictions and jealous madness.

"Heaven reckon this night's suffering to me in any future error!" she exclaimed, folding and sealing the letter she had written. "For I feel, even now, that if I knew him really lost to me, my heart would break; or, no—not that," she muttered, after a silent thought, which was—"or falter in its duty to Heaven, to regain him!"

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. NARCISSUS BROWNE, the clergyman before spoken of, was a straightforward, conscientious young man—one who laid down his plans firmly and undeviatingly, like the rails of a Great Western, or any other line. No one had ever seen him smile; he was a serious man, and accomplished all seriously. He possessed the resolutely determined look of the pilgrim who had *not* boiled his peas, and made up his mind to suffer intensely. This world was, indeed, a road of rocks to him, and he *would* see no flowers peeping through fissures in them.

In person he was very tall, and amazingly thin, and generally wore a "dress coat" which looked like an inheritance from an elder brother who had been shorter in the back than himself. It was a marvellous-looking coat, and sat upon his shoulders as upon wings; consequently, it stood well out from the waist. From beneath this, perfectly detached, dangled long, thin legs, with large feet heavily attached to them. As regarded his hair, assuredly he was guiltless of connivance in the death of any animal to procure marrow for beautifying it! He gave you the idea of a man who had been brought up on beef-tea, mutton-broth, and gruel. But the man had a head, and something like a heart, into neither of which had it ever entered that Miss Adair was in love with him! In truth, of love he had no conception, nor, indeed, of anything stronger than a water-gruel sort of liking.

Angelina's attention to him he really placed on the list of charity, as she always seemed so desirous of assisting him in his labours; and, ever anxious to oblige, he favoured all her wishes. They Sunday-schooled together, catechized, sermonized, and invented hideous clothing for the children—all this to the envy of many not so favoured as she was.

The cause of this preference was simply that it never entered

into Narcissus' head the idea of love on her part. Other young ladies were dangerously *pretty* for a man resolved, as he said, not to marry, or their advances were unmistakeable. Angelina had more than once assisted his memory in some classical forgetfulness: this, and her strong-mindedness of manner, almost made him forget her sex. He thought of her much more as a "good fellow," in his sort of fellowship, than as a possible partner for life. This would have been as inconceivable a conversion to his orthodox mind, as a step towards Romanism. The world is one blind error! When we do not deceive ourselves, somebody else does it for us.

Narcissus put out all light between them, and, trusting to his molish sight, saw only an invaluable helpmate in spiritual duties. Alas, for her peace of mind! Angelina had very mundane thoughts, and one of these had been, to beguile him to the opera that evening. But she signally failed; nothing could induce him to go.

"I dislike music," he said; "had I my will, there should be none in churches. I never could understand sensible persons standing up seriously, making grimaces, and uttering hideous and startling screams. Talk of parrots—that is nature, and I respect it; but you never will persuade me Heaven intended men and women to shriek words much better conveyed to the ear in softer tones."

Something "of the necessity of fashion," she gave utterance to.

"Possibly so; but for a sensible woman like you to care for such a plea is beyond my comprehension. However, do not let me deter you."

"You have never then been!" again hazarded Angelina timidly; she was a lamb to *him*.

"I thank goodness, never!" he emphatically cried. "I have heard what is called good singing, often—that was enough for me; besides, a clergyman has no business there."

She would have given anything not to go, but Miss Caffir would have been disappointed. She had invited her, and the

woman might be useful to her; she knew not what to do. A last a hope soothed her; she would go to him, a penitent woman, next day, and renounce all such follies for the future. Who knew what this resolution might not accomplish in winning him? for her suit progressed slowly.

This latter hope only sprung up in the course of the evening; consequently the first part of it was commenced in bitterness of spirit.

Something, too, in Miss Caffir's manner towards Mariam annoyed her; she was too civil by half. Miss Caffir was only a fire-worshipper, adoring the rising sun.

Every one paid Mariam's ingots homage, and the poor girl's clear-sightedness saw it, and the sickened spirit sighed over the dross encasing her.

In the opera-box sat Mrs. Adair, looking everywhere with her *lorgnette* for Lord Billow. Mariam's eyes, unassisted, sought the only one she thought of.

Miss Caffir kept shifting the ivory *lorgnette* to every possible focus, and offering it to Mariam, who quietly but coolly declined it; and Angelina sat in pale yellow silk, which made her all one colour, pondering over her *jonquil* love, Narcissus.

"Is not that his lordship?" asked Mrs. Adair of Mariam for the twentieth time, directing her glance towards a *lorgnette* elevated towards their box.

"Really, madam," growled Angelina from her corner, opposite her mother, "it is quite ridiculous your thinking so much as you do of Lord Billow!"

"Angelina," answered her aroused parent, "I consider your tone, in addressing me, most undutiful."

"Do you indeed?" was the sneering reply.

"I declare it is!" exclaimed the incorrigible mother, after a long survey; "and now he sees us, he bows, he is coming up. 'How d'ye do?'" she uttered above her breath, as if a sprite were there to waft the words to the pit; she was tired of the mere pantomime of bowing.

"I think you are mistaken, my dear Mrs. Adair," said Miss

Caffir, resolved to be amiable to all, that she might be brought out again; "that gentleman bowing is Sir Philip Montgomery."

"Of course it is," said the amiable child; "mamma always makes some ridiculous mistake. Now we shall have that bore here all the evening! I daresay he has been invited!" And she glanced at Mariam.

"If you allude to me," the girl answered, quietly, "you labour under a mistake. I should not presume to do so, especially as I dislike Sir Philip."

"Your assignation to-day on Hampstead Heath does not look like it."

Mariam shrugged her shoulders, but deigned no reply.

"I tell you," energetically cried Mrs. Adair, "that it is not Sir Philip. I hope I am not quite blind yet."

"Do, mamma, put down your *lorgnette*, or we shall have all the pack of Miss Lincoln's admirers flocking up here. Fools and second-rate men are always gregarious; they would fall alone—their strength is in numbers."

Still Mariam made no reply—perhaps she did not hear; her attention was fixed on some one in an opposite box.

Mrs. Adair and the other two were warmly disputing about the supposed Lord Billow, rising gently, like his namesake, not on the bosom of the ocean, but up the stairs, to strand himself at the fair widow's feet, when the door opened, and in walked the offending Sir Philip. The "Oh! it is *you*, Sir Philip?" from Mrs, Adair, was very significant, only he did not notice it. His whole attention was fixed upon Mariam, and she, scarcely speaking, turned again and looked at the box opposite. She was certain Adair had been there, and withdrew when she noticed him. "Why was he hiding? Why not come?" were her anxious mental questions.

She knew nothing about his having heard of her canter over the heath.

"Did I not see Lord Billow standing near you, Sir Philip?" asked Mrs. Adair, wounded to the quick by some observation made by Angelina, before his arrival, about failing sight.

"I was not aware if he were," was the reply. "But I should say not; I left him at the Carlton dining with a party of friends."

"Long since?"

"Oh! half an hour. Indeed, I do not think he will be here to-night; he spoke of going to some whist party."

"Indeed! Where? Did you hear?"

All this was between himself and Mrs. Adair.

"I don't exactly remember. Stay, I think he said——"

"Was it Mrs. Bruce's? I know she has a small *réunion* this evening. We are going after Sontag's aria."

"No; not there, I am certain," and he laughed; for Billow said, speaking of her house, "that she never had a partner fit for a man to play with!"

"I hope you are satisfied," sneered Angelina.

"Partners at whist are not partners for life!" mentally ejaculated Mrs. Adair, laying flattering unction to her soul. "A woman *may* revoke, yet win a man's heart; a preoccupied mind makes spades or clubs alike, and a thinking man might see this."

"Miss Lincoln is very grave," said Sir Philip, drawing a chair close behind hers.

"Is there anything very funny being enacted?" she asked, without turning her head.

"No; but music makes one glad generally."

"Perhaps so; a jig, or a reel on a barn-floor. Fine music makes me sad."

"I dislike operas and music generally," said Angelina, paving the way for her intention of withdrawing for the future from the like.

"Dear me, Angelina, how can you utter such an absurdity! Surely Sir Philip must remember your ecstacy one evening here, about a month since!"

This was her mother's *patte de chatte*, a little quiet revenge; for Sir Philip was then to be caught, not Miss Lincoln's avowed slave.

"Pardon me," answered the enraged chameleon; "your memory sadly fails you sometimes, madam. I never expressed such an opinion."

At that moment the box-door opened, and Adair, followed by Elton, entered. The former looked pale, and bit his lip when he beheld Sir Philip.

"Are you not surprised to see steady me at the opera?" asked Elton, after the usual salutations. "The fact is—that, 'tis your fault, Miss Lincoln," he whispered in her ear.

"As how?" she inquired in the same tone, looking up with a smile. She began to like this sarcastic man, judging correctly that there was much goodness concealed beneath his cold exterior; she had experienced many a covert act of kindness from him, when others had, in the commencement, persecuted her. Indeed, his were the counsels which had made her treat Angelina with cold contempt, and, standing upon her own dignity, almost defy her to wound her. But even yet she succeeded sometimes.

"I will tell you," he uttered in reply to her question "as how?"—"I was perfectly well aware that both Sir Philip and Richard would be here to-night, and I thought I might possibly be a target, to receive some of the barbed arrows they assuredly would shoot at one another."

He looked so keenly in her face as he spoke, that, despite herself, she coloured.

"What a detestable character that of a flirt is!" said the gentle Angelina to Sir Philip, who was forced, *faute de mieux*, to speak to her. "Look," she continued in an audible tone, "at Miss Lincoln; so much power does she possess over her blushes, that she can call them up, even through her native tint, at the gallant observation of Mr. Elton, whom she avowedly dislikes!"

Elton heard, and raising his voice a little, so that every tone reached Angelina's ear, said *impromptu*, as if in continuation *of a conversation*,—

"The lady has twenty thousand, they say; so Mr. Browne has chosen wisely; your pet parsons generally do."

Mariam looked amazed; she thought him mad for an instant, until a sly glance towards Angelina drew her senses into the right channel, and she merely answered, "Indeed!"

Angelina sat aghast, not once suspecting the trick, the gentle revenge Elton had taken.

"Did you like your ride to-day, Mariam?" asked Adair, as unconcernedly as he could command himself to speak. Elton was watching every turn in the countenance of both, without appearing to do so; whilst Angelina was silently thinking about the horrid rumour which had just reached her ears, and Sir Philip *appearing* to be intently occupied with the stage.

"Yes," she replied; "for Mr. Elton was my cavalier."

Certainly Mariam was an apple of discord, for all her words created emotions; this sentence had point for more than one. Elton was ever the first to collect his senses.

"Your slave for life!" he said, laughing, "and grand bashaw over the rest of my species! I shall recall this to your memory, perhaps, some day, Miss Lincoln."

"What an idiot an old man in love makes of himself!" whispered the recovered bile of Angelina, to Miss Caffir on her left. "Is he bowing down to the gilded native, too?"

"Man or woman, my dear Angelina, is an idiot in love," he answered as placidly as if the phrase had not been directed against himself; his quick ears heard all. "Who in the mythology," he continued, "had thousands of ears? Can any one tell me? Argus had eyes, Briareus hands, who ears? for I am his or her follower! I scarcely know which is the greater fool, an old man or woman, in love; we should leave that to all you lambkins—eh, Dick?—eh, Miss Lincoln?"

"How prone people are to speak of love—how few understand it!" answered Adair.

"Do you?" asked Mariam hastily, without reflecting.

"Certainly, my dear Miss Lincoln, you *do* understand beg-

ging a question better than any young lady I ever met," said her untiring enemy.

Mariam's warm blood was rising in her bosom at all these attacks, but she sighed and repressed it.

"What question?" she gently asked; "there could be none between Richard and myself, which I might not ask, or he answer, of the nature of affection, for from the first we made a bond of brotherly and sisterly regard. Did we not, Richard? and I am sure neither ever has thought of breaking it; I can answer for both."

"You may," he replied—Elton alone detected the bitterness of the tone—"for you know your own heart, and can read mine as correctly, it seems, as myself."

"Love has many stages," hazarded the hitherto silent, but listening, Sir Philip.

"And houses of call, before taking refuge in the church," said Elton, with a glance at Angelina, who bit her lip.

"How many stages in a woman's heart?" asked Mariam, turning to Elton.

"Two," he answered; "the first, at starting, when, as a girl, she inevitably falls in love with the first pretty boy, however silly, who looks enigmas of affection in her eyes, which she only rejoices too much in endeavouring to solve in her heart."

"How fortunate, Mariam, you never fell in love with me!" said Adair, laughing to hide his annoyance; somehow the conversation displeased him.

"Very," she replied in the same light tone. How deceitful the best of us can seem!

"And the second stage," Elton continued: "second and better one, when in riper years the woman bows down before talent, cleverness, and wit; and assuredly this must be the more dangerous of the two. The girl may see a pretty boy, and change, or loving only a sea-shell, the beauty of which caught her eye when glittering in the sun, and bathed with moisture, it seemed glorious to her sight in colouring and in shade."

"And some day," interrupted Mariam, "she sees it high and dry, dim and dingy, and cares not to stoop and raise it."

"Miss Lincoln," said Sir Philip, "is supposing a man who has *only* a pretty face, as Mr. Elton expresses it. Are the young *all* fools?"

"Heaven forbid!" she replied; "*I* am wise, for I am incapable of love!"

"But not deficient in assurance," whispered Angelina to her friend.

"Come, Elton," said Adair, "conclude your definition of the wiser part; we all know Mariam too cold, or wise, to be led astray, however tempting your portraiture."

"Well, in the riper love the man may be plain; but cleverness has ever a spiritual beauty of its own, even in the plainest face, which speaks to the soul. Then, too, some gentle word may possibly have been said, which none other ever spoke so well, and the faithful heart recalls it, should the faithless eye be ever tempted astray; this is the love to be most dreaded for its tenacity."

"You plead your own cause well," cried Adair bitterly, "supposing none of the young other than fools."

"I beg your pardon, Dick," answered the imperturbable Elton, "for I have overlooked a third stage—the one where antiquity plays sixteen to a boy's love. You see I give the ladies the preference in my examples; the men are merely passives. These bring odium on the sex; and, as we do not live in the land where children are privileged to put their progenitors under ground when no longer youthful, certainly this last stage ought to lead to Bedlam, where the lunatic might find that gentle coercion healthful for her malady."

"Mamma, are you listening?" inquired Angelina, touching her mother's arm with her fan.

This unexampled personality, even from the strongminded, candid ("another term for rude") Angelina, thunderstruck all; for the application was too home, as her mother had been anxiously watching all the evening for the absent lord of her

thoughts, and the frequent mention made by her of his name left none in ignorance of whom she hoped to see.

A dead silence, for an instant, followed the words, then an almost imperceptible titter, checked by an "ahem!"—and all was still. A rap at the box-door aroused them. Adair hastened to open it, and there stood a gentleman with a card for Miss Lincoln!

"My dear aunt is here!" she cried, rising hastily. May I go to her box, my dear madam?"

"Certainly, Mariam!" answered the scarcely conscious Mrs. Adair. "Richard will escort you!"

A smile, a bow, and—"I may possibly return with her to supper." And the delighted and emancipated girl departed with Adair. Alas! that two so calculated to make life a road of joy to one another, should be bent upon strewing it with the thorns of false pride and mutual deception!

CHAPTER XV.

THERE was an almost total silence of some moments after the departure of Mariam: all felt it in some manner, except Mrs. Adair, who returned to her observatory behind the curtain. It has so often been touched upon, the great difference existing between the love of a widow and a girl, that it seems almost impossible our doing so without the danger of plagiarism; but yet, in defence of Mrs. Adair, we must say it was not the mere enthralment of a man which she so much desired; it arose from many causes creating one fixed resolve—to conquer, if it were possible of accomplishment. In the first place, she was far from comfortable in her home. Angelina took care of that. Richard loved, but was seldom with her. She liked Mariam; but was too much in awe at heart of the domestic tyrant to show it. Now it would be too late to win the girl's confidence or affection. The opportunity had been lost, and first impressions had done their work in estranging her ward from her. Last, and not least of her motives, was the coronet of Lord Billow; for *he* was the object of her determined fancy. It was no general universal affection towards eligible persons —if she failed with him, she would try none other. But she really saw no just cause for despair, when she remembered how she was at that moment enacting a Cleopatra's part to a dead Mark Antony, slain by her charms, at even a most matronly age.

Truly, our affection's growth springs often from a very foreign soil! Until the evening of "the revoke," she had never even dreamed of his lordship, except as an excellent partner at whist; but that evening he had been unusually polite, and the clenching spring which closed him in her heart was, "the revoke!" When she did it, he looked at her, as her heart

whispered, in a most peculiar manner, saying, "Mrs. Adair—Mrs. Adair!—I should never have expected such a blow from your fair hand!" And then added, smiling, "But I suppose we must pardon your preoccupation. Happy the absent, present in your thoughts!"—mere gallantry, at which a girl would have laughed even as she blushed; but a widow knew the value of every word. If worked ingeniously, they were all settings for the diamonds of her coronet. From that moment she was in a fair way of revoking in every game where hearts should not be trumps, for she could think of nothing else; and, quite ignorant of her budding affection, the billow rolled onwards, nor dreamed of breaking at her feet.

When a man looks back and hesitates in the case of a widow's pursuit, he will be quite certain of becoming *not* a pillar of salt, like Lot's wife, but a marble one, to displace the broken column in the entrance-hall of the family mansion, emblematical of the defunct prop of her existence.

Lord Billow had not the least idea, as we have said, of looking back; nevertheless, she was firmly resolved this time to follow suit. And whilst he was elsewhere perfectly calm, counting tricks and honours, she was playing points with her *lorgnette*, which never ceased its rotatory occupation in the pit, watching for T. K. Hervey's

"Him who comes not."

Thus we will leave her, and peep at the others. Angelina of course was cross. Sir Philip tried to seem indifferent, and chatted to all who would talk. There was but one pleased, and that was Elton, and his joy was purely unselfish; he was glad when the two departed together in whose eyes the man of discernment read mutual satisfaction.

When Adair put on Mariam's cloak and led her out of the box, it is astonishing how very lazy he suddenly became after the hasty manner in which he accomplished that; his walk up *two flights, for* Mrs. Wilton was two tiers above them (we have

said she was not one of the leaders of fashion), was indolence personified; Mariam, too, seemed in no hurry.

"You look better after your ride to-day, Mariam," he said, after surveying her sideways; this ride seemed uppermost in his thoughts.

"Yes, I think it a very delightful, healthful exercise: I always preferred it to all others."

"Especially in agreeable society."

"As you say, a nice horse, nice companions, and a quiet lane on a May morning, are luxuries we seldom meet with unalloyed. When we do, they are fairy gifts of joy!"

"You speak *con amore*, and the more agreeable when *impromptu*; pleasures lose by anticipation; the mind is superior in creating to the mere body in realizing, generally."

"I don't understand you, Richard."

"I mean your ride to-day with pleasant companions; what green lanes did you find? and I think it was not *quite impromptu* either, was it? Did you not make up your party in advance?"

"Had I, I should have asked you probably to accompany me. You know I ride almost every day, and you are seldom to be met with; so I asked Mr. Elton to escort me."

"Of course you knew you had friends expecting your advent at Hampstead?"

"Indeed, I did not! Mr. Elton proposed the road, not I; but how inquisitive you are!" And she looked in his face—had he known how anxiously!—to read the confirmation of a hope there.

"Oh, no!" he replied, coldly. "I merely ask for something to say."

Mariam sighed, but very softly.

"What is that for?" he inquired, looking at her; her face was bent downwards.

"Nothing, Richard; that is, I was thinking how silly of me to fancy any one felt an interest in me, at home. No—not home!" *she cried* impetuously. "The home is where

the heart is; mine never can feel at ease where fate has thrown it."

"You are candid, at all events," he said, bitterly.

"I am candid," she continued, in the same hasty manner. "I could almost say I hate every one in Eaton Square; they are so cold, or, when not that, cutting towards me; and even you have lately become like the rest." And the proud lip quivered with emotion.

"If you wish to think so, do, Mariam; but I have remarked, that whenever I speak kindly, friendly to you, and we are alone, you invariably make some pretext for a misunderstanding, as if you feared I might presume on it to utter something unpleasing."

"What do you mean?" And she looked full in his face, and her heart beat high.

"Oh, some unmeaning fooleries like what others say to you; but don't fear, I am a candid fellow, if a wild one. I never say what I don't mean; so you need not fear being civil to me, Mariam."

By this time, tears were oozing from her proud eyes; only Adair could call these forth.

He looked at her. "Mariam," he said, stopping, "this I will say, and truly. I have a sincere interest in you, and, for your own sake, implore you to curb your natural violence and susceptibility of temper; I have seen you go into hysterics more than once, and, believe me, if you hope ever to make your home happy, you will fail unless you learn to subdue yourself."

"Is there—is there," she uttered, almost inarticulately, "a more painful, soul-sickening thing, than to be ever misinterpreted? You do, indeed, not know me, Richard, and Heaven keep you from half the pain your words inflict upon me! Do you know your own heart well? until you do, abstain from judging the one hidden from you."

She was trembling much; he, not less moved, took her hand; but at that moment the box-door opened, and the gentleman came forth who had been sent by Mrs. Wilton to seek her.

"Oh, here is Miss Lincoln!" he said. Richard dropped her hand, unperceived by the other.

"Will you not come in?" she asked tremulously.

"Thank you, Mariam, no; I will not intrude into Mrs. Wilton's box; I know I am no favourite there; Bruce told me he was going to ask my playfellow, Kate, this evening; I must go and look for her."

"Oh! very well." She spoke cheerfully, but a bitter pang crossed her heart, which the girl's countenance was schooled to conceal. It is a sad, sad thing, when the face, which was created to show the passing emotions, becomes, by the desecrating influence of the world and its lessons, a mirror of deceit, reflecting nothing but hollowness. Mariam, by the painful position she held at Mrs. Adair's, was losing all the freshness of youthful candour and confidence. Adair's words sent a pang through her heart, and then it became as ice, cold and heavy. She dreaded Kate, and in her suffering quite overlooked the fact that Mrs. Bruce had a *soirée* that evening, consequently could not be at the opera; whilst Adair was guiltless of a wilful untruth, for in the chaos of his mind he knew Bruce had spoken of asking Kate to go or come somewhere, and the first thought which presented itself was to suppose her at the opera.

Merely bowing, with a few cold words in salutation to Mrs. Wilton, he turned away, then stepping back, said,—

"Shall I return for you, Mariam?"

"Thank you, no; I will not trouble you. I shall probably go home with my aunt."

"Very well, good-night," and away he turned; and after sauntering about in a desultory manner, got into a friend's box not yet tenanted, and there, behind the curtain, watched Mrs. Wilton's. The conversation there was not of the most inspiriting kind; that lady, after a few words of kind greeting to Mariam, asked,—

"Is Mr. Adair ill? I never saw any one so much altered as he is of late. Is there not consumption in the family? His figure,

which is so slight, and the changing colour, are indicative of a tendency to that complaint, I think." Mariam could scarcely reply; a new fear was held up to her view. Mrs. Wilton, with much annoyance, observed her ill-concealed emotion, for, to her eye, it was so much more than a sisterly affection warranted.

An elderly lady, *vis-à-vis* to her, made the conversation more agreeable, by enumerating all the cases of sudden and untimely deaths which, within her own observation, had accrued from that dreadful disease.

The crowning martyrdom was, when the gentleman before noticed, though not named, for he was one of those useful bamboos, so perfectly indifferent to us, that we care little whether they are Smiths, Browns, or Greens; the only colouring they cast over our thoughts is, when they shade some one we like from our view by their officiousness in running after our cloaks, fans, or carriages, and being always *mal-à-propos* there, to tuck us under their arms, just as *the* one is struggling through a crowd to reach our side.

This man, we say, crowned her martyrdom by entering into an aggravated list of all poor Adair's enormities—in racing, betting, gambling, &c. &c.; for he nodded and winked the rest to Mrs. Wilton and her aged friend. But poor Mariam saw it.

"Better, ten thousand times better, have remained where I was," she thought; "for there I had——" she did not even admit to herself who she had; but the heart said it. She did not allow them quietly to speak all their calumny against him —she defended him; and even her aunt excused, blaming his mother for all. For though firmly resolved, if possible, to break off the affection for him which her keen sight of love detected in her niece, she really felt for Adair, without knowing half the generous nobility of his ill-directed but manly, proud heart.

Mrs. Wilton was not in Mrs. Bruce's set, consequently there was no tongue there to remind her of the *soirée;* so her eyes *looked round* and round, up and down that wide range of *human faces,* for Kate Bateman's.

There is *nothing* more painful than seeking one in a thousand, especially in the blaze of light of an opera; the weary head, the straining eyes lose all power at last of discernment, and sink and close in despair! In sheer sickness of heart she shrunk back at last, and the sad, handsome face looked so stern, that Mrs. Wilton felt her own kind heart aching; the head leaned against the side of the box, so that all the rich heavy curls of jet fell below the waist, over her shoulders, thrown back, as they ever were, from shading the brow or face —that waist which a hand might almost have clasped; and as she sat thus, apparently intently listening to the music, her soul rose in bitterness against Adair, Kate, herself, fate—all! and she felt that many a word of his had been too lightly spoken, when she recalled the abrupt and almost unfeelingly rude manner in which he had assured her he cared nothing for her as a lover.

Whilst she was in this mood, the box-door gently opened, for Sontag was singing, and Sir Philip peeped in. He was an especial favourite of Mrs. Wilton's, having found means of obtaining the *entrée* to her house, the better to meet Mariam. Mrs. Wilton was quite enlisted on his side, and anxious to promote his suit with her niece. Niece we must call her, though she was only as an elder sister, and as such she loved her.

"May I come in?" he whispered.

"Yes," was Mrs. Wilton's reply, with a finger on her lip, "if you will hold your tongue awhile."

His arrival, strange to say, was an immense relief to Mariam. She imagined Adair beside Kate; her fancy had portrayed looks and words, until her brain reeled, and a spirit of revenge, new to her heart, made her hail the entrance of this man, personally unpleasant to her generally.

The bamboos we have before alluded to are generally the most discreet men in existence; nonentities themselves, they have no pretensions to one particular woman, but to the sex in general. *It never could* have entered into the mind of this

one, filled alone with fans, cloaks, carriages, and immpossible tickets to be obtained, and all the other wants of women of fashion, that Mariam would deign to dream of him! so he smiled pleasantly upon Sir Philip—a marrying man—as he rose and gave him his own seat beside Mariam, into which he slid, finger on lip, in reply to Mrs. Wilton's command of silence.

Even Sontag cannot warble for ever, divine songstress as she is; and, amidst the frenzied plaudits which followed her song, Sir Philip shook hands with the hostess of the box; and was excessively amiable with every one. Instinct told him he had one warm supporter there, and there was no reason why it should be otherwise; he was well-looking (a woman's best reason), rich, and titled; no one could have desired a better *parti* for Mariam than he was.

"I am your shadow, Miss Lincoln," he whispered, delighted at a reception from her different to what he had dreaded receiving; "but 'tis not of you, but of myself, for my most worthy part, the soul, alas! is ever with you!"

"No one," she replied, forcing a gaiety to the surface, to hide her uneasiness of heart, "would imagine from your perfect ease of manner, Sir Philip, that you were a dismembered creation; for what is mere body divested of soul?"

"The man beside you!—a restless uncomfortable animal, without pleasure or content, save in pursuing the treasure he has lost, which ever flies him—peace of mind."

Mrs. Wilton, too delighted at Mariam's most unusually quiet manner beneath Sir Philip's advances to interrupt them, was deeply interested in the fate and fortunes of Linda di Chamouni, and the bamboo talked his little nonsense as contentedly to the dame of sixty, as he probably would have done to sixteen, for it was a series of pretty little anecdotes about himself.

"Is the soul, peace of mind?" asked Mariam, scarcely knowing what she said. "If so, then, why are those who are *endowed with* much, restless and of ambitious, energetic *spirit? None* of these speak peace."

"All souls are not alike. Mine seeks but the calm you might so easily award it—fellowship and union with yours."

"Sir Philip, my soul is ever waking, ever seeking, ever regretting—think what a very sorry companion it would make for yours, longing for peace!"

She tried to speak lightly, and smiled; and, even as she spoke, the eyes were leading the thoughts away—seeking, as she had truly said. And whilst she sought, in a box opposite, on the pit tier, there was a door opened—a stream of light from the corridor gleamed in, and she saw a lady and gentleman enter, but she could not distinguish their faces. The lady did not appear *en toilette*, but muffled up in a shawl, and she slid into her place behind a curtain, which was drawn more forward, and nothing but a pretty kid glove exposed to view occasionally. The gentleman did not come forward either, but another did—Adair; and, seating himself opposite the curtained figure, seemed most *empressé*, and the fine face lit up with animation and pleasure. Thus they sat some time, then the door of the box opened again, the gentleman went forth, and still Mariam could not see his face. Adair rose and seated himself behind the curtain, and imagination—reckless, cruel fiend—filled up the picture with the gentle looks and words lavished on Kate Bateman—for she it must be; but who was the man? Mr. Bruce, perhaps, for Mariam well knew the interest he had taken in her as of a father; and the very mystery of their entrance seemed to be a proof of a wish for concealment. And all this imprudence this good-natured man had committed, to enable lovers to meet! How more than clever jealousy is—she is a genius, ever overleaping almost impossibilities, like child's play, but, like Moore's moonlight rambler, leaving common sense behind.

Mariam arranged all this, and added to it the sudden recollection of Mr. Bruce's *soirée*, which made it clear as could be that the good-natured man had brought her to the opera first, *en cachette*, to meet Adair—some reason existing, perhaps, to make *prudence* necessary in their meetings. This was her

arrangement, through a tortured brain, quite losing sight of the many gross improbabilities, and one especially—his candour in mentioning that Kate was coming. The facts are thus: Adair went into a friend's box, as we said, to watch Mariam. That friend came, accompanied by his wife—a homely, music-loving woman; too lazy on this evening to dress for the opera, and too fond of Sontag's song to miss the luxury of it, she had put a large shawl over her *tête-à-tête* with her husband dinner-dress, and, creeping quietly into their box, drew behind the curtain for an hour's enjoyment. They were most intimate friends of Adair's, and after the opera the three slipped away like persons *en cachette;* and Mariam, more confirmed than ever in her opinion, turned almost impatiently towards Sir Philip, and said, scarcely knowing what she uttered, "You are very silent, Sir Philip; has Sontag carried off your thoughts to that charmed land, wherever it may be, whence her soul-fraught melody comes?"

"I was silent, true; but not even bewitched by Sontag's song. I was wondering—forgive my impertinence—who has been the donor of that curiously-wrought ring which you always wear on *one* finger. Is it a spell to guard it from a plainer one?—if so, I have dreamed a dream, to make even me, so little of a visionary, mad."

"That ring," she answered, and her face grew strangely and suddenly stern, "was a dying gift from my father—I mean the last thing he ever gave me. It has a charm attached to it."

"May I ask it?" And he raised the hand, the pretty little hand, and looked at its charmed guardian more closely: it was of beautiful Indian workmanship.

She was so calm, so unusually kind towards him, that his heart beat high with hope. She was only at that moment reckless, and too absorbed in her own thoughts to know all he did, or said; she scarcely felt him touch her hand. They were sitting a little back in the box, quite out of view of the others; she had drawn back, sick at heart, when Adair left.

"May I ask it?" he said.

She glanced at him with almost a haggard look, then her Indian nature rose above the colder northern one of her father; the nostril dilated, the cheek glowed, the eyes grew dark as night, there was revenge in every lineament—alas! that miserable revenge which makes us sacrifice ourselves to wound another. She remembered all Adair's hatred towards Sir Philip, without knowing why, or dreaming herself the cause; she knew his happiness would be despair to the other—to that other whom she would almost have died sooner than even grieve, in her calmer moments; and yet so completely had her passions mastered her reason for the moment—she, poor child! whom none had ever judiciously led—that the eye scarcely quailed beneath his glance of hope, and fire, as she replied, "I promised never to part with it till I gave it to my future husband, who should return it on my wedding-day, as a keeper, to guard the sacred one which made us one."

"When shall I restore it to you, Mariam?" whispered he, almost inarticulately from deep emotion and unexpected happiness, as he drew the ring from her finger, and placed it on his own; her hand by a sudden movement had resisted, then the muscles relaxed, and the ring was gone.

"Stay!" she cried, with a sudden look of fear, yet scarcely conscious of what had passed—she felt so bewildered, half triumphant, half maddened; "stay!" and she caught his hand before he had quite secured the ring.

"You cannot refuse me—you cannot doubt my love," he said, trembling with joy, so sudden, so unhoped for; for she had coldly, but decidedly, refused him during their ride that morning.

"Then," she uttered—and her voice scarcely evinced the slightest tremulousness, though she was nearly choking with the overwhelming thought of avenging herself on Adair, whatever the cost—"pledge me your solemn word of honour, that to no soul breathing will you utter one word of this, of what has passed between us, until I give you permission."

"I pledge you my sacred word as a gentleman." The hand

dropped his, and he secured the ring. "But it will be soon—will it not, Mariam? I scarcely know what I say—I am mad; for I durst not dream this after your cold reception of my suit to-day."

"Forget all!" she uttered, in a momentary burst of painful thought, passing her hand over her brow.

"Forget all? Not this, Mariam, dearest."

"Oh!" she gasped painfully, and again the hand passed over the brow. In lowering it, her eye caught the finger where the ring *had* been; she looked a moment in half-bewilderment, and then, making an effort to rise, uttered a wild, hysterical cry, and fell back fainting.

Half an hour afterwards, the bamboo tapped at Mrs. Adair's box, and entering, presented Mrs. Wilton's compliments, and Miss Lincoln having fainted from the heat of the house, her aunt had taken her home for the night, and would send for Leah, as Miss Lincoln had asked for her.

CHAPTER XVI.

MAN is a strange creature; it would seem as if his good resolutions were merely on the surface—a coating of gold over a baser metal. And these resolutions he gives utterance to, but places no guard over them, to secure the inroads of a thief in the night to steal them away—that thief, his own human weakness.

Adair wrote the letter to Kate which we have read; perfectly satisfied with it, he posted the missive, and went to the opera. Kate wrote hers in tears, and followed up that act by a *cheval-de-frise*, the best for such an occasion—flight. But before flying from their humble lodging, the early post brought her his letter, which she read exactly in the sense it deserved—that he still loved her (though perhaps with a secondary affection), by whom he was so warmly loved in return; and most assuredly would take his almost daily ride to their cottage at about six o'clock. So he did, and found the place vacant—their present abode unknown! He stood transfixed, not quite understanding it; and with a feeling of self-abasement at the superior judgment of this girl—for, during his thoughtful ride to Highgate, these were nearly word for word his cogitations,—

"There can be no possible harm in my seeing Kate; to desert her, in her father's state, would be inhuman!" (O wily demon!) "I have told her I do not love her; I did so as gently as possible. Kate is proud; her pride will place an insurmountable barrier between us, and we shall be as we once were—a dear brother, and a loving little sister, darling Kate!"

Here he had a rambling, unconnected train of thoughts, which resolved themselves at last into, "Well! supposing an impossibility, that we, led away by affection, forget all, and live for one another. I never would forsake her, never! and

my conscience certainly would acquit me, for I have taken every precaution against it; and I deserve much praise in doing so, for I really love her."

Here there was another confusion of ideas.

"No, I do not love Mariam!" appeared at last legibly, like a previously white leaf held before the fire, on which invisible ink has passed. "I do not love her. She is a cold-hearted, worldly girl, and certainly cares nothing for me, or she would have seen I once loved her—truly loved her! She is a cold, heartless flirt; sitting, as she did last night, all the evening behind the curtain with that conceited fool, Sir Philip—then the history of her fainting; I daresay it was temper, about something or other!"

Hereabouts, he stopped at the cottage. Vain were his inquiries—not a trace remained of the fugitives. "They had quitted for the country," the woman of the house said, "she believed; for Miss Bateman said sudden business called them away."

"Kate will write, and tell me the cause of this sudden determination," he soliloquized, riding away, "and I can go and see her wherever she may be;" and, driven by his indignant feelings towards poor Mariam, he returned home full of love and anxiety about Kate.

What mere puppets we are, when reason and common-sense desert us!

At his club he found Kate's letter, and then—only then—the better feelings of the man conquered, and he rejoiced in her strength of mind, even while regretting her society. We have said he was no cold-blooded, deliberate villain; but an excellent man, perverted by wrong guidance.

Kate's letter opened his eyes to the truth of how much he really loved Mariam, by the calmness with which he bore the former's flight, and the bitterness he felt in the thought, that had the latter been less wealthy he might enter the lists, and, perhaps, win her love; galling him onwards to any thing *desperate, he joined* a knot of betting men in the reading-room,

and scarcely knowing, or caring, what he did, lost a thousand pounds, where his present embarrassments would have made one hundred an act of mad folly. With this pleasant infliction on his mind, he dined gaily, and then, driven by an irresistible impulse, went home to look for Mariam.

It was ten o'clock when he entered his mother's drawing-room, and though the windows were open, through which the sweet breath of many flowers, crowding the balcony, came sylph-like into the room, though gentle, softened lights were there, there was an air of melancholy, which we often find in apartments, scarcely knowing why. Mariam sat apart at her rosewood frame, but the roses were left unfinished, and the thoughtful fingers, kindred with her heart, drew the unthreaded needle indolently down each line of canvas—it was the only sound in that room; for though Elton sat there, he was silently watching Mariam over the top of a volume in his hand. Mrs. Adair was reading.

There was an exclamation from all when Adair entered. Mariam's start and momentary pleasure, elicited "Ah!" and then the face looked down in spasmodic trouble, and the trembling fingers took up a skein of silk.

Elton laid down his book, and Adair flung himself into a chair beside him, after a covert glance at Mariam.

"Where is Angelina?" he asked at last.

"Upstairs probably," answered Elton, laughing, "preparing for her diurnal work to-morrow."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, my dear boy," replied Elton, "where have you been of late, not to know the changes in your own household? Angelina starts off every morning on a mission for the regeneration of mankind, in dark cotton dress, thick-soled shoes, poke bonnet, and her hair out of curl, carrying in her hand one of those leathern boxes which deserve the name of "Temptations," for, I am sure, they have led to more crime of act, and inquisitiveness, than any thing ever invented."

"'Tis true," answered Adair. "I never see one in the hands

of a pretty woman without a strong desire to possess it and her secrets; it seems redolent of them."

"Judge, then, the temptation one of these must be to a thief. It breathes an atmosphere of cheques and bank-notes; but Angelina's is only lined with tracts, written by contract, so much the dozen, by some miserable offshoot of literature in a garret, over a pint of porter. Inspiration, avaunt! they have only the weight of their parent cup about them. Angelina's leather conveniency also contains a scrap of paper, with notes of the probable arguments she may require in her mission; a smelling-bottle, to revive the fainting, sums up the contents."

"And her purse?" asked Richard, with his eyes ever fixed on the silent, absorbed girl before him.

"Not much of that, Dick. Angelina is a strongminded, reasoning woman, full of new inventions; one of the set who give a pinch of cayenne, in a glass of water, to a starving man, in preference to an old-fashioned loaf of bread: bread costs money!"

"And all this humbug—for there is no pure charity in it," said Adair—"for the sake of pleasing Mr. Narcissus Browne! It is disgusting to see how these young curates drag all the weak women in their wake!"

"Quite right, Dick, in your expression 'disgusting;' but you have misdirected it—the women hunt up the young curates. They would be quiet and God-fearing enough, if the women left them alone, and in their peace, doing infinitely more good, than distracted in mind, as they are, and hunted from post to pillar. It is a thousand pities, among their other gifts, that they have not the one of invisibility as well.

"By your account, Elton, they lead a hard life of it!" laughed Adair.

"Hard?" rejoined the other, "an adamantine rock! every moment expecting to be blasted and blown to the four winds by feminine powder. I consider no life more laborious than a pet curate's; he is always expected to look pretty, be amiable, and, *like Sir Boyle* Roche's bird, in two or a dozen places at the

same time. Talk of soldiers, in time of war, sleeping in their harness; *that* was child's play to the everyday life of a pet curate! Sunday! it is no sabbath of rest to him; he must work therein like a galley-slave—what with Sunday schools, and the well-divided attention to the lady teachers, who go, *of course*, only for sake of the poor children! Then sermons, in which he must watch every word lest he offend the foible of some one; and the dozens of dinners and cups of tea out of every body's china which he is expected to consume, make his cup of life bitter indeed! And after all this, when he lies down in his bed at night, and pulls his nightcap (if he wear one) over his ears, it is with the pleasant anticipation of perhaps soon having to drag it off again, brush up his hair, and sally forth in a pouring rain to visit some one in spiritual fear, which eventually proves to have arisen from an imaginary offence given to himself, a holy man."

"I'd sooner be a coal-heaver than a pet parson," said Adair.

"I sincerely wish you would, Richard," ejaculated his mother, closing her book and looking up.

"What?" he inquired, staring in amazement.

"Become a clergyman," was her rejoinder. "Was not that what you spoke of?"

An involuntary burst of laughter was the reply from both Elton and Adair; even Mariam smiled at the mistake, for she had heard every word uttered: when Adair's deep sonorous voice spoke, every intonation found its home in her heart.

Mrs. Adair became exceedingly indignant at this hilarity.

"Forgive me, mother," cried her son; "but you have made a slight mistake. I expressed a wish rather to be a coal-heaver than a pet curate—a Narcissus Browne."

"I am sure, Richard," she rejoined, "it would be infinitely more to your credit than leading the life you do, among jockeys and horses. I declare I consider the most fortunate circumstance which has for a length of time occurred, has been the introduction here of Mr. Browne; my dear Angelina has become a perfect *saint*."

"Long may she continue so," answered Adair, rising, and winking at Elton as he spoke; "but I am sceptical: put a zealous, pious, but old man in Narcissus' place, and I fear the ass would cast off the lion's hide. You have not spoken one word, Mariam," he continued, having strolled across the room, and leaning over her chair. "Are you not better?" and the voice took an inconceivable tone of tenderness; she was looking so sad, that, whatever the cause, he pitied her.

"Yes, Richard, thank you," she uttered, without, however, looking up.

"Tell me," he asked, seating himself beside her, "was it really illness, or only a little black blood, gushing forth last night?"

He little dreamed how much his words galled her; it was like an open wound, on which the air suddenly blows.

"You think very ill of me," she said bitterly; "you misjudge all. Forget my half Indian origin, and think of me in Christian charity. I truly fainted, and *not* from temper; I knew nothing until I arrived at my aunt's."

"Poor girl," he said kindly, "I am really grieved to hear it; but you are better now?" and he took her hand.

"What have you done with your Indian ring, Mariam?" he asked suddenly, looking at the unadorned finger.

A thrill passed over her whole frame; she looked vacantly a moment at the hand, then withdrawing it from his grasp, said, in a low tone, "I don't know. That is, upstairs, I suppose."

"How strangely you speak!" and he smiled. "You have a Lady Macbeth air of tragedy in saying that; but you shall not take your hand away. You do not want to work—I shall forbid it—I wish to talk to enliven you. Remember, Mariam, if you ever part with that ring, it must be to me. I always admired it."

"I would to Heaven you had it!" she involuntarily uttered, almost to herself; but he caught the words, and still more, the tone.

"Why, why? Is there some magic attached to it? I know you are superstitious!"

"No, no, nothing," she hastily answered. "Let us talk of something else. Were you pleased with the opera last night?"

"Yes, much," was the vague reply. Her strange manner gave rise to a question in his mind, whether she was not what is termed in India "a lunarian;" many there are, without positive madness. This idea, and the certain feeling we sometimes have of relief, amidst the regret consequent upon the absence of some one, whose presence, though pleasing, inspires a dread of after burdens on our conscience, made him more than usually gentle with her. He felt glad in his heart that Kate was gone, though an unacknowledged feeling even to himself.

"I should have returned to escort you to our box again, or to Mrs. Wilton's carriage, but that you were so well surrounded." This was bitterly uttered.

"Where, and how did *you* see that?" she hurriedly said, looking in his face. She had withdrawn her hand from his, and both were clasped together on the frame, as she asked this question.

"Where from? Why, from my mother's box, where I sat all the evening."

"Not *all* the evening. You were in a pit box opposite ours some time."

"That was Mrs. Frampton's; but did you notice me?" And he looked earnestly, half hopefully, in her downcast countenance.

"Then she, Mrs. Frampton, came after Miss Bateman left; but I did not see any one else enter. I thought you had accompanied this lady and Mrs. Bruce to their *soirée*."

All this was spoken in a hurried manner, and made doubly impressive by the questioning eyes raised to his; while the unclasped hands parted; and one shaded the brow as the elbow rested on the frame; the other was clenched in almost terror, awaiting the solution of her doubt.

"Of whom—of what are you speaking?" and again he grasped her hand. "I declare, Mariam, I sometimes think you mad, you are so incoherent. What do you mean about Kate? She was not at the opera. Frampton and his wife came to their box—she, *en déshabille*, kept behind the curtain—you know them. I have not seen Kate since yesterday afternoon, and she and her father have left town."

"Heaven have mercy on me! Heaven have mercy on me!" ejaculated the agonized victim of her own waywardness, covering her face with both hands. "I think I am mad!—mad indeed to have done it!"

Adair was really alarmed for her reason—not one gleam approaching the truth crossed his mind. He sat in stupefied astonishment—they were apart from the others in a second drawing-room, but within sight and hearing. Elton had engaged Mrs. Adair in a discussion to withdraw her attention from the two.

"Mariam, Mariam!" he said at last, trying to withdraw her hands, pressing on the brow; "dear little Marie, tell me what is it you mean?"

She withdrew her hands with a wild wrench, and flinging back her hair, which had partially shaded her face in its bent position, she fixed her gaze in agony upon him, and exclaiming —"Oh! Richard Adair, you little know what you have been the cause of,"—with one hurried movement, it was almost a bound, she flew to the side-door, tore it open, and fled; leaving him convinced of her almost lunacy.

"Leah!" she exclaimed, in wild emotion, as she entered her room; "come with me, come—dear Leah. I must see my aunt this night, I cannot rest."

"What em bein doin to missy?" cried the woman, starting up, her face darkened with passion. "Missy Angelina do it?"

Mariam shook her head, as she paced the room, wringing her hands.

"Madam Adair, den?"

Again the head negatived the anxious question.

"Massa Richard?"

Mariam's only answer was a deep, suffocating sigh.

"Leah pray him dead!" uttered the Indian girl, with intense fervour. "All bad here, but Massa Richard de wosser; he man, and he treat poor dear missy ill!"

"Do not hate him, Leah!" exclaimed her mistress, almost choking to subdue the emotions she was struggling against. "I only am to blame."

"Missy too good, too gentle," said the woman, whose turbulent feelings flashed in her black eyes. "Ebber since we be come, Massa Richard give her trouble. Missy," whispered she, drawing close to Mariam's ear, "Leah not care for danger—Leah only poor Ingy gal, made to serve missy—she, Leah, give Massa Richard someting to drinky, and he nebber tirsty no more—nebber tease him dear missy again!"

The whisper came as the whistling sound of a serpent in Mariam's ear; she felt sick at heart, a cold tremor shook her frame, the dilated eyes fixed themselves on Leah, the hands were raised before her face, as if to repulse some object of horror. Step by step she moved backwards, her gaze still fixed on the girl, who, alarmed herself at the emotion she had given birth to in her mistress, stood cold, immovable as a statue.

"Merciful Heaven!" burst from Mariam at last, as she sank on a chair, covering her face with both hands.

A moment after Leah was on her knees before her, clasping hers in earnest prayer. "Missy, forgive em!" she cried, whilst the big tears rolled down her dark cheeks. "Missy, forgive em; but him lub bibi so dearly, him not bear to see him in trouble. What Leah's life, so missy content? Leah tink missy hate Massa Richard."

"Leah," uttered her mistress, withdrawing her hands from before her affrighted sight, and laying one trembling one on the black crisped head of her too faithfully attached companion, "I have nothing to forgive; your crime would be mistaken zeal and love towards myself. There is another whose pardon you must ask—God's! Leah, you did not think of that—did

you, dear Leah? Even if I hated Mr. Adair, it would have been a fearful crime. But I *do not* hate him. I alone have been to blame; it has been my own wilful temper. God give me strength to subdue it!" Her voice trembled as she looked upwards, but the face was calm, and purified from all distorting passion. "Pray, dear Leah, and pray that I may never lead others to sin by my ungovernable passions, as I have now done, though but in thought."

The poor faithful girl's head was bowed on her knees, and she wept bitterly. Mariam threw both arms round her neck, and raising her to her bosom, clasped that dark uncouth face (yet all so loving towards herself) to her heart, and a deep mental prayer was uttered, from that hour to labour in that most difficult task, the subjugation of ungoverned temper. She felt her own ebullitions of passion before this untutored child of nature had led her to conceive this heavy crime.

It was a lesson she never forgot, and one of those heaven-sent ones to call us to repentance and reformation.

"Come, Leah," she said at last, rising calmly, in outward seeming, but the heart trembled still, "we will go to my aunt; I *must* see her to-night. We can quit the house unseen. She will bring me back, and nothing will be said by Mrs. Adair."

Without uttering a word, the girl obeyed her every movement; she was too much affected by all Mariam had said to her to look up; but in contrition and sorrow followed silently down the stairs.

"'Pon my word," exclaimed the saint of her mother's creation, Angelina, hastily entering the drawing-room a few minutes afterwards, "your ward, madam, chooses nice hours to scour the streets alone, with that horrid accomplice of hers. I have just seen them close the hall-door furtively after themselves as I came from my own room!"

"Impossible!" cried her mother, looking hastily round: "she *is in there, working.*" She turned as she spoke from the book to *the inner drawing*-room, and there sat Adair alone, intently

counting the threads of her embroidery, and pondering on Mariam's words and strange conduct.

"Richard!" called his mother, "where is Mariam?"

"'Pon my soul, mother, I cannot say; but I know where she ought to be, or I am much mistaken—in Bedlam; she is as mad as one who has slept beneath the moon's light."

He sauntered into the larger room as he spoke. Elton started from a well-feigned doze; he had lost not one word of all. Even Mariam's last words had reached him; he had closed his eyes to think more uninterruptedly.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mrs. Wilton, though accustomed to the eccentricity and vivacity of Mariam's character, was not a little surprised to see her at the late hour in which she arrived in Russell Square.

Her manner, too, surprised her, unlike her usual one when driven by annoyance, or Angelina's sarcasms, to seek her aunt's society; it was calm, though full of emotion.

"My dear child!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilton, with that tenderness which belongs to no age, for the young apply the term to the young as the fondest they can find to express their love, "what brings you hither at this hour? No annoyance—nothing unpleasant, I trust?"

"Dearest aunt," said the other, warmly embracing her, "I came because I could not rest until I had unburdened my mind to you. I want you, dear aunty," and she enfolded her closely in her arms, "to listen to me, comfort, guide—all! I will not be wilful again, believe me; only forget how old I am, how young you are, and let me be to you as one of your little girls; lead, *command, love me*—'tis all I ask." And the girl we have

seen so turbulent, so overwhelmed by passion, sat down beside her aunt-sister, and, with their arms around one another, she told her astonished listener all that had taken place the previous evening at the opera, between Sir Philip and herself; even Leah was not made a party to this confession, but dismissed to the society of Mrs. Wilton's maid.

When Mariam concluded, her aunt pressed her still more closely to her breast, and sincerely congratulated her on the choice she had made, as Sir Philip was a favourite of hers.

"Stop!" cried Mariam, trembling, scarcely knowing how to conclude; "hear all, and then, do—oh, do!—act for me, and break off this most mad, hasty engagement!"

"Break it off, Mariam! You must indeed be mad to ask me to do so, or think of such a thing yourself. Why enter into it at all, and now, in twenty-four hours, seek to escape from it?"

"I have not told you all," answered the agitated girl, hanging down her head in self-abasement; "but I will. I came here to-night to do so—to show you my heart as it is, dear aunty, with all its faults and wilfulness. I—I!" she hurriedly continued, looking down on Mrs. Wilton's hand, which clasped her own trembling one; "I once denied my love for Richard Adair; in doing so, I uttered an untruth. I do love him better than any thing in the world—better even than I love you." And the full dark eye fixed itself a moment, in the simplicity and firmness of truth, on the other's face, and then the black lash, like a heavy cloud, veiled it again, with all its fire. "I feel that, were I quite certain he loved another, it would almost kill me. This is very unfeminine, I know, unloved as I am by him; but, loving him as I do, I *never* can marry Sir Philip, so break it off, dear aunt—pray, do!"

Mrs. Wilton sat almost aghast, at this hurried, wild confession, and prayer.

"Why, in Heaven's name, then, have last night voluntarily accepted him, Mariam?" she asked at last.

"Don't I tell you I was mad! I did not know what I did,"

was the hasty reply. "Try if you can, aunt, understand the half-savage nature I possess—'my Indian one,' as Richard sarcastically calls it. I knew he hated Sir Philip for some cause, and, maddened by jealousy, I hoped to revenge myself upon him by my self-sacrifice. As if he cared what I did!" she added, despondingly.

She then related the scene in Mrs. Frampton's box, and her own delusion, in consequence of the belief that it was Kate Bateman.

"And what can you hope for in this vain affection, my dear child?" asked the kind tongue which forbore to chide, or speak cold worldly reason to the poor, ungoverned girl, nestling on her bosom, as if there alone she had an abiding-place for her aching head.

"Nothing, nothing!" was the sad reply. "I know he does not love me; sometimes he pities—he did to-night, for he saw I looked ill—and one gentle, feeling word from him is more than *all* the whole world beside could utter!"

"My poor Mariam, my poor child!" said the gentle sister woman.

"Oh, yes!—poor indeed! For all of love I could offer him would be received with contempt, with rejection; and I love well, aunt—oh, I can love well. Do not think me forward in all I say." And the eyes looked up so pleadingly, as the soft hands closed round the neck bending over her. "But I was brought up a woman from my infancy; I never was a child. They, my dear parents, loved me so wholly, that they prematurely matured my thoughts, that I might approach nearer to them, and sooner comprehend their love; and just when it had ripened into full age, they left me with my heart overflowing, to rest it all on this one who despises, if he do not hate, me! Oh, how I detest his pity!" she cried energetically, impatiently struggling to rise. Then, as by magic, the muscles relaxed, and she sank again, without power to move, in the arms around her; for before her eyes flashed Leah's, filled with deadly thoughts, and she remembered that her impatient temper had

awakened them. She had, indeed, registered her vow of amendment above.

Mrs. Wilton, with that strong, good sense, tempered by so much exquisite feeling, which characterized her, uttered not one word; she only pressed her the more closely to her heart, and kissed the cold forehead. She knew nature *would* have its sway, so she allowed it to exhaust itself before urging the colder dictates of reason.

"All I ask," continued Mariam, after a pause, "is that my engagement with Sir Philip may be broken off. I never shall be cared for by Richard; but, oh! do not ask me to marry another—I cannot!"

"Mariam, now you are calmer, let us talk of this affair seriously. You love Mr. Adair. You think your maiden modesty will prevent your ever betraying yourself to him: so it may—*wilfully;* but, Mariam, when we love, our heart is like the throne of an usurper, surrounded by traitors! The tongue need not speak, but the lip will quiver—the lip will utter no word of affection, but the voice will tremble, and one unguarded intonation of a kindly phrase betrays all! The eye may try to look cold and stern, but it will quail before his; and there is far more real eloquence in the eye which dare not, than in the one which boldly avows all, self-confident of a return. My child, Mr. Adair will read you as an open page—*I* have, from the first. How much more, then, will not the man before whom you in secret bow down in helpless affection?"

Mariam truly felt the justice of all this, when she recalled her hurried exclamation on leaving the room at Mrs. Adair's. Her words, her flight—all had traitor voices, and she felt as if she durst no more appear before him.

After a long-continued conversation with Mrs. Wilton, this lady, though most unwillingly, promised to see Sir Philip on the morrow, and endeavour to break off the engagement—but the task would be a most difficult one; for how give any comprehensive explanation of Mariam's change of disposition

without betraying what, in love to her maiden modesty, she would not have known; and with a sigh for her hopes destroyed as regarded her niece's marriage with Sir Philip, which would have effectually precluded the chance of such an event with Adair, Mrs. Wilton prepared to accompany Mariam home.

Too fond of the girl not to have kept an anxious eye on all surrounding her, Mrs. Wilton had made herself well acquainted with Adair's position, and feared now, more than ever, that when all his own resources should fail, he would seek in Mariam a loving but despised wife, that hell-created thing, to patch up his position by her fortune. It shows how the wisest, best, keenest of us may be led into erroneous suppositions by prejudice. Mrs. Wilton hated the whole family, and wrongly judged the noble heart of Adair, which was leading him into every excess, sooner than be suspected of interested motives, where strong affection alone swayed it!

Not even her aunt's presence saved Mariam from a shower of reproaches; Angelina had so well worked on her mother's mind during the girl's absence, that Mrs. Adair coldly, but decidedly, declared that for the future she should exert the authority of a guardian, and forbid any visits unless sanctioned by her consent. Mrs. Wilton bit her lip, but spoke calmly, as she could command herself to do, for the girl's sake, and terminated her great effort by begging Mariam might be permitted to visit her on the morrow. Under the influence we have spoken of, this was formally refused, on the plea that her escapade that evening deserved punishment, not indulgence; and this wild heart, with all its strong womanly emotions, was compelled to bow down to the punishment of a child.

Mariam avowed she had acted wrong in leaving home at that late hour; she united her prayers to her aunt's, for she expected on the morrow to see Sir Philip, after Mrs. Wilton should have explained all she could explain to him, and from his own lips hear her freedom pronounced—but all was said in vain. Mrs. Adair felt sleepy, cross, and disappointed in the

book she had been reading; and these minor causes made her strengthen the repulsion Mariam felt towards her, by undue harshness, at a time when the girl needed kindly guidance and support, and not alone turning from herself, but she alienated the one whose strong good sense would have confirmed every virtue, eradicated many a fault.

Mrs. Wilton left, and as she embraced her niece, she whispered, "I will do all I can with Sir Philip to-morrow."

Mariam crept sadly up to her own room; to reach it she had to pass Adair's, the door of which stood ajar. He was talking loudly to some one, who said, "Dick, I have watched both closely; that girl loves you, and you her; why, then, play the fool?"

To which the other replied sarcastically, "Pshaw, Elton! she is an arrant flirt, and loves to chain all to her car; and, *quand même*, I would not for all the world marry a girl with so violent a temper as hers; she would stab me some day, if I offended her; and I very candidly confess to you, I have a prejudice in favour of fair women: she is more even than gipsy in appearance."

"Fair women!" replied the other, thoughtfully, "Kate Bateman, perhaps."

"Ay, Kate Bateman, my pretty Kate, I wonder where she is now!" and the bosom sighed audibly—the empty words were for Kate, the sigh for Mariam; and she had involuntarily, unthinkingly stopped at the sound of the voice she loved so well, and at the last words and deeply-uttered sigh, fled down the passage, her hands to her ears, to shut out further sound, lest it should madden her quite.

Mariam passed a night, one of those bitter ones which a feeling heart alone might know; even Leah, her faithful slave at heart, for she knew but to blindly obey every look of her mistress, was excluded from all share in her wild despair; at the bottom of her soul there was a fearful terror, which made her conceal her anguish from this girl. Let not our calm northern readers start, nor turn in disgust from this almost child, but strong woman

at heart, with all the passions of her half Indian birth, warring within—but we portray nature. Mariam *durst* not tell Leah, for her own heart was bursting with revenge; where, then, might not the other's sympathy lead her? Her sight was dizzy with the loud-tongued passion in her heart. Adair had been so cruel, he had treated her so kindly, he had made her love him, and *almost* at times persuaded her of a return; and what had it terminated in? Bitter irony and contempt from him; yet, amidst it all, she bowed to a wholesome lesson—he hated her for her temper, before all else! Oh! she would correct this; she would subdue herself. Let the struggle be of life and death, he should not fear or despise her more; she would, at all events, win his respect—let his love go! Love is a falling star, bright in the heavens one moment, gone for ever the next, leaving a greater darkness for the memory of its brightness.

The morning found that young face so wan and sad, that even Angelina forbore to be sarcastic; perhaps she divined that nothing could move her victim to any emotion, for indeed it seemed as if the mechanism of existence alone remained, the Promethean spark gone again to its native heaven!

Adair was at breakfast, and most kindly, nay, more, affectionately asked if she were well?

"Quite, thank you, Richard," was the calm reply, without a pang seen or felt. She was cold and resigned, prepared for any annoyance.

"Then why are you so sad, Marie?"

"Am I? Well, I will try and not look so. I was reading much last night, and this morning, perhaps, it has given me a thoughtful appearance; I will endeavour to shake it off," and she smiled, but only with the lip, the eyes were unmoved. A true joyous smile quivers on the lash of a half-closed eyelid, sending forth coruscations, gems of mirth; she had been reading every line he had ever written, whether a letter in absence, which often had been the case, or some of those tiny things when present, which we treasure so well when we love.

"You should not read at night, my dear Mariam," said Mrs.

Adair kindly; "it makes the eyelids red, and draws the face, and subdues the fire of the eyes fearfully."

"I will not do so again, madam," was the gentle answer, "if it displease you."

"We shall be burned in our beds," was Angelina's only approach to sarcasm.

"You must really be ill," said Adair affectionately, as they sat alone after breakfast. Angelina was off, as Elton had described her; Mrs. Adair, it little matters where, thinking probably, and arming herself with charms, to conquer the turbulent Billow; and so Adair and Mariam sat alone.

"Shall I read to you whilst you work?" he continued.

"Yes, if you please, Richard."

"What shall it be?"

"Any thing you choose."

"Well then, I think," he said impatiently, galled by her coldness, "it had better be Gray's Elegy; that will suit your humour, for you have a funereal countenance; or Sterne's Maria, that might enliven you."

"Poor Maria!" fell from her lips. "I know nothing more perfectly sad than her melancholy. It was the cheerfulness of sorrow, bearing its cross at the *foot* of a mountain, knowing how much more severe each succeeding step would make it."

"'Pon my soul, you are in a pleasant mood, and I, who have stayed at home to rouse you from your stupor, whatever the cause."

"Have you really, Richard?" and the eye half smiled. "It's very kind of you."

"Then put down your *crochet;* those eternal twitchings of the finger fidget me to death. I believe the inventor of *crochet* had St. Vitus' dance; put it down, and let me talk to you," and he took her unrefused hand.

"Do you know, Mariam," he commenced, caressing the little softly warm fingers as he spoke, "I want to understand you thoroughly. I imagined I could read any girl almost at a *glance; you* have completely beaten me. If you are not mad,

you are the most incomprehensible creature I ever met in my life!"

"Why? do you for an instant think me insane? Surely not."

"'Pon my soul I have been tempted to do so; for you change every moment, and for no visible cause. I part with you all smiles, and seeming happiness; when we meet again you are are either sad, or so nervously susceptible, that one can say nothing to you."

"It is temper, Richard," she replied; and the lip gave an uneasy quiver.

"Temper? Ay, that may be a part of it; but look here, Marie; I often call you ill-tempered to teaze you, but I do not think so badly of you as I say."

A bitter smile crossed her arched lip, as she almost despised him for what she deemed his deceit, and paused in silence to ask why he was deceiving her.

"You are very silent," he continued, looking in her thoughtful face. "Do look up; I want you to tell me something, will you?"

"If I can, certainly."

"Then look up, for I shall read more than you may choose to utter in your eyes; they are very eloquent, Mariam, beneath that heavy canopy of jetty silk, which shines in the sun, like as if the dew were on it."

Once how such words from him would have made the quick warm blood gush to her brown cheek, bronzing it in mellowness of beauty. Now she sat like a statue; all the feeling was at her beating heart, which, enclosing its sensations within its inmost recesses, throbbed almost to bursting; she felt every word as a taunt.

"What do you wish to know?" she asked, looking up, but the eye was stern and cold.

"Don't look so serious, dear Mariam; I want you to tell me what you meant last evening by those strange words as you rushed out of the room. Do you know they, and your

flight to your aunt's, have caused me a sleepless night of thought?"

"*You* lose one moment's rest on my account!" she asked, sarcastically; then added, before he could reply, struggling at the same time to withdraw her hand in disgust at his supposed heartless trifling; "but I forget, I am treating seriously that which is mere *badinage* on your part now, as much as my conduct last night was a sorry attempt at mystification."

"You do not mean *that*, Mariam? do you? can you?" and his face became grave, and painfully amazed in expression.

"I do truly, Richard," and she smiled in triumph at the wound she inflicted on his pride, as she thought.

"Truly, you are an odd girl—an incomprehensible one!" As he spoke, a shade passed over his handsome face, the drooping lid veiled the disillusion written in the downcast eyes, and the relaxing grasp left the hand free. Adair had said truly, a sleepless night gave reason and common sense a chance of being heard, and these overcoming false pride, he resolved to know the true state of Mariam's feelings towards himself; solve the doubt which made his heart throb with a hope, engendered by her wild expression, her too evident agony, from some mistake in which he bore a part. And now, after all this fond hope—this subjection of his pride before his affection—she had merely been playing a fool's game of mystification!

Let us all beware of pride—'tis the darkest demon walking the earth in sheep's clothing—calling itself honesty, uprightness, and dignity;—it blights many a fair land of promise—absorbs many a noble outpouring of a generous heart!

This made Adair the previous evening utter what he did to Elton, instead of candidly confessing, what no man need feel shame in owning, even though he love vainly, that his heart is given to a worthy object! This made Mariam now enwrap her mind in darkness to the fact; a child might have read in his eyes and manner that he sincerely loved her. "And what you said about the ring; I know you much prize it—wear it almost *as a charm*—was *that*, too, but stupid jesting, to ——" he

paused; his aching heart nearly betrayed what he would now so anxiously conceal.

"Mystification, Richard,—all mystification!" She laughed, while the eye looked up in proud triumph upon him, till the very lashes seemed to laugh towards heaven in upturned, quivering richness.

"Then, by Heavens, Mariam, you are the most accomplished actress I ever met in my life! I pity the unhappy wretch who ever bows down before you!" As he spoke, he rose with haste and heightened colour from his chair.

"Do you not pity him?" she exclaimed, with flashing eyes and proud smile; "so do I, Richard, for I am incapable of loving. And yet, I suppose, I must feign so to do, some day; Mrs. Adair wills it, and she is my heart's guardian."

"Your heart's guardian!" he contemptuously answered, standing before her. "You do not possess such a thing; or, if you do, 'tis a pomegranate one, in a casting so tough that it is scarcely worth the trouble necessary to perforate it."

"A knife will do it," she added, and the tone was changed to one sad and thoughtful. "A knife is a keen word, spoken perhaps at random; but what then? The fruit is sour, bitter, distasteful to most persons, even when attained!" She sighed despite herself.

"Mariam!" and once again he was beside her, grasping her hand, whilst his own trembled—"Mariam, you *do* possess soul; let me read it—if for another, let me read it as a brother, and be *that* at least to you; if there be power of divination in you, guess all I would say, and do not think me less than I am, in my thought of you."

"I have a prejudice in favour of fair women!" then his sigh, and "darling Kate," rang in her ears. With a cold, almost repulsive, feeling at the contact, she withdrew her hand, and folding both calmly on her knee, she said, looking in his face,—

"I have nothing to confide to any one. Had I, it would be gladly spoken to you, Richard Adair, for you have been kind

to me amidst unkindness—generous, where all else were ungenerous; had I a secret to confide, a counsel to ask, it would be to you—from you. Forgive me my foolish jest—you have come in brotherly affection to seek my confidence, and advise with me for my happiness. I am very grateful to you—it is *so* kind, amidst many other occupations, to think of me!" Saying this, a hand, the coldest and calmest, was laid upon his, but the pressure was as ice, so soulless.

"Marie, Marie!" he cried, in bitter feeling, "*I* will now say, in truth, what you but parodied: 'You little know what you have done!' God bless you, Marie. If all were as sincere towards you as I am, or were you so to yourself—for I fear you are nurturing deception—you would be a very happy girl!" He pressed her hand in his, and stooping, kissed the brow before she could draw back, and, without a word more, quitted the room.

"Triumphed!" she uttered between her closed teeth, standing erect, with her whole face denoting the wild joy of that feeling. "If it had killed me, he should never have read my heart. What—read, and trample on the poor dark thing! No, no, no, Richard Adair! Marry some fair girl—go, marry Kate Bateman, and see if her heart will love you as my Indian one could! Oh, man! how heartless the task you undertook to-day against a poor orphan child, homeless here!—to win her to a confession, then scorn her because she is darker and mellower in colour than your northern fruit! It was not worthy of you, Richard; for I love you for your worth sake more than your handsome person! Beauty wins senseless admiration, not love!"

Had he seen her then, could he have doubted? She stood so strong in her love—so saddened in her countenance; and those eyes, so flashing before, were cast down, and through the heavy silken cloud rained summer's strong rain. She started at a coming footstep—brushed away her tears—and, once more, the fingers seemed the active agents of an unoccupied mind, as she plied *the crochet*-needle.

A servant flung open the door and announced "Sir Philip Montgomery." Almost a scream escaped her, as she sprang from the seat she had sunk into a moment previously.

Sir Philip entered; he was very pale, but calm and collected in manner.

"Miss Lincoln," he said, as the servant closed the door, "I may esteem myself fortunate in being enabled to see you alone."

She merely bowed, and dropped again on her chair, feeling, from his manner, that he had had an interview with Mrs. Wilton.

CHAPTER XVIII.

When Adair passed from the drawing-room, where the conversation with Mariam had taken place, he entered a smaller one adjoining, opening on the staircase, and she naturally expected that he had passed out; but, as he opened the door to do so, he heard footsteps on the stairs, and drew back, unwilling, in his frame of mind, to meet any one.

The persons ascending were Sir Philip and the servant, who had been standing at the hall door as the former drove up; in consequence of which he was admitted, without startling any one by his rap, or giving notice of his arrival. As he only inquired for Miss Lincoln, he was at once shown to the apartment where she sat; and thus he entered suddenly, and most unexpectedly, as we have seen.

As Adair closed the door again, he flung himself on an ottoman, and half burrying his face in the pillows, sank into a train of wild, regretful despair. All around was forgotten, unnoticed, unheard.

He was only reading, from his too faithful memory, the

events of the past months, since Mariam had been his mother's ward; and as he traced, day by day, the growth of his affections, since the first hour wherein he rushed upstairs to comfort a sad child, and found in its place a handsome young girl, in all womanly beauty, before him, he felt broken in spirit, from the sudden crushing of all his hopes, the strength of which he knew not till then. What was he, what should he be, without her? He had been afraid to look on uncertainty before; how now, then, bear the assurance of never being loved?

For her calm collected manner had so completely deceived him, that he felt the utter hopelessness of ever watching a ray of affection spring from so unpromising a sky to him.

Lost in these bitter thoughts, he heard nothing that passed in the next room, save a vague murmur at first, which he imagined arose from his mother, probably, and Mariam.

Sir Philip spoke lowly, without apparent suffering; but when we feel much, the lowered tone conceals what else would be betrayed in the voice's weakness, and incapability of firmness, when highly strung.

Mariam had only motioned to a seat, which he quietly dropped into, at a short distance from where she sat.

"Miss Lincoln," he said, "you are no doubt well aware whence I come?"

"You have seen Mrs. Wilton?" she uttered, in a half questioning, half affirming tone.

"I have, by an invitation from herself which I received early this morning."

Mariam's fingers trembled over the work in her hand; her head was bent down, she could not look up.

"You are silent," he continued, "and in that silence I feel the almost vanity of my attempting to obtain a more lucid explanation of the bitter mystification I have been the victim of, than the incoherent one Mrs. Wilton had to offer me this *day, when* soliciting, in your name, a release from our engage*ment of a day's* date, willingly entered into by you."

"Forgive me, Sir Philip, if you can," she uttered, dropping her work, and looking up with clasped hands.

"It was wilfully, cruelly done!" he cried; "for I am not a merely trifling man of fashionable life, to woo to-day, forget to-morrow. Miss Lincoln, I most sincerely, truly loved you, and have, since we first met: I shall not forget you in a day —or years, perhaps."

"Forgive me—*pray* do!" was all she could utter through her pale lips; his stern calmness convinced her of his sincerity.

"You are moved," he said, without replying to her prayer, and a gleam of hope crossed his countenance. "Let me endeavour to win your love. I will do so, untired by coldness, unchecked by many futile efforts; I will not intrude upon you, neither will I inquire why you have thus decided, now; I will mark it in my thoughts as a girl's caprice, from maiden pride, not to be too easily won, and I shall love you the more dearly if, a second Rachel, you bid me only win you in years!"

His voice was mellowed by its intenseness; and, drawing near, he took the unwilling hand, which trembled in his grasp.

"Come, Mariam—still my Mariam, let me hope so—hope it may be. I am as a mariner, looking out for his ship at sea; I see a white sail in the distance—'twill be all I am watching for; she will cast her anchor at my feet, eagerly awaiting her on the beach, and I, rejoicing, shall claim my own dear bark. Let it be no allegory, dear Mariam, but a realized truth: say what you will, or, rather, leave all unsaid, and let me keep this ring." And he held up his hand, on which her pledge glittered.

At this moment Adair awoke up from his stupor of despair. For some moments the hum of a man's voice had reached his ear, though very indistinctly. He knew not whence it came; the last words alone fell clearly on his ear; for, in the energy of his speech, Sir Philip raised his pleading voice. Adair looked up in bewildered amazement at the words, "Let me keep the ring."

"Sir Philip," she replied, struggling to speak calmly, and

distinctly enunciating every word, "I can only supplicate your mercy and pardon. Excuse I have none to offer. Think me what you will, term me as you please—flirt, untruthful, unwomanly—all; only this believe, that I am a very sorrowful girl—a most sincerely repentant one for the part I have acted towards yourself; for I believe all you say—I, surrounded by deception and the suspicion it engenders of all, believe you sincere."

"I most truly am, Mariam!" he exclaimed with energy, "and as truly love you."

Adair had risen hastily from the ottoman; his first impulse was the natural one to every honourable mind—to quit the spot, and not listen to a conversation not intended for his ear. Before he could accomplish this, she named Sir Philip, and the name arrested him as if he were suddenly paralysed. Only one idea crossed his mind—this was a lovers' quarrel. For some instants he heard no more than the name, which rung in his ear; her subsequent words sounded in unconnected confusion there. Sir Philip's last heartfelt prayer came distinctly from the outer room. With a hasty, unheard step, he reached the door to fly, though he would have given worlds to hear all, even if it should confirm his fears.

As the servant closed the drawing-room door upon Sir Philip, he noticed that the one of the lesser one stood ajar, he shut it noiselessly, and almost unconsciously, imagining the catch of the lock strained, turned the key. Adair heard nothing of all this, he had flung himself on the ottoman; and now, to his excessive annoyance, feeling the awkwardness of his position, he found himself a prisoner. What could he do? To enter the room where they were would only still further add to the embarrassment of his and their position. Should they, too, by some untoward chance, come into the one where he was, what could he say? If he coughed to warn them of his presence, he should be brought into contact with the other, and this he felt would thoroughly unnerve him. In no very pleasant mood he once more sat down on the ottoman, and, taking up a book,

endeavoured to fix his attention on the pages; but this was the vainest effort of any he had as yet essayed. What between his own bitter annoyance, and the thought in his mind about the other's prospering suit, word after word fled before his vision, without reaching below the surface of the troubled stream of his vexed spirit. Sentences were as floating birds on the waters —the power of comprehension, a tough weed far below, imbedded in the slime and sand! He tried not to listen, until the very tension of his nerves made every word as an arrow piercing his brain.

"Hear me, Sir Philip!" exclaimed Mariam, with energy, "and then judge me as you will. If I did not believe you to be an upright, honourable man, one incapable of taking advantage of a woman's confidence, however much that woman may have injured you, I should not give utterance to what I am now about to confess. I love hopelessly, but unchangeably love another. What the barrier between us may be, it is not for me to say. But in a hope—a mad one—of forgetting him—of perhaps loving you, I accepted your hand at the opera. The rest you know; it was the insanity of a moment, for the next I felt how vainly forgetfulness would be sought, how sinful and utterly impossible it would prove to marry another. My illness there you were witness to; but it was last evening alone that my heart became perfectly open to myself, and there I read despair! Forgive me—this is all I can ask!"

"Pray, pause," he said, again taking the hand she had withdrawn. "I will be so patient in my hope—so watchful to win you, let me only make the endeavour. We can but part at last!"

"It must be *now*," she answered, in a tone of almost calmness and decision. "I would not bear the weight of this engagement, even though but a conditional one, a single day longer. I know myself—I should but be deceiving, if I bade you hope. Yours or any other's I never can be—his I never shall!"

"Then," he said, dropping her hand, and coldly rising, "it only *remains for me* to restore you your ring—the charmed

ring your father left to bind a daughter's loving gift of herself. Take it, Miss Lincoln—it has been desecrated. I do not envy the man it shall bind to your car, for it will be no bond of peace or love; it has played a part as unconsciously base as the trained brute which serves as decoy, luring its wild companions to slavery or destruction!"

Mariam hung her head, speechless at the bitter taunt, almost nerveless from suffering and the shame he had cast upon her mad, unreflecting act at the opera. She held out her hand, and clasped it on the ring he offered her, scarcely knowing what she did; an instant afterwards her hand relaxed, the poor pledge of her rashness rolled to the ground, as she buried her face in both hands, and sobbed convulsively.

Sir Philip stood an instant irresolute; his heart yearned towards her. Truly he forgave all; for, loving himself, he could excuse all; but the galled heart was still too unbending to admit its weak pardoning, and far too proud to sue again. He stood an instant looking upon her, then quietly reaching his hat and gloves from the table, turned, and without a word, quitted the room.

One only fixed thought, and a just one, was in his mind—Mariam loved Adair; he had before suspected that, and his return of her affection; but if the latter were the case, why her despair? As he pondered on all, he hated him the more, for probably not loving the creature he would have given worlds to possess the affections of. Something suddenly crossed his mind in his homeward drive about Adair and Kate Bateman; their evident (to say the least of it) friendship for one another, to which he had been a witness at Mrs. Bruce's and elsewhere.

Adair stood like one in a dream. This is a trite old comparison; but none other could accurately describe his state—he had dreamed, and now awakened. The state of the case as regarded Sir Philip was clear; her words explained all. For an instant his heart seemed bursting with hope; some hope we dream and awaken from, to see it fade away—the last lingering star, which Aurora has chased from the sky. His thought

was, when he remembered her wild expression the previous evening about the ring, and the harm he had been the cause of, that she loved himself, but, for some strange motive, concealed it. He was on the point of rushing forward, forgetful of pride, doubt, all, and beseeching her to admit it, if his own affection found an echo in her heart; but a touch of ice was on his hand, a cold, stern, young tone in his ear—they were her parting pressure of his hand when his love had nearly betrayed itself, and her candid and unmoved admission that she had been mystifying him.

Then his harassed brain sought for a solution of the enigma of her confession to Sir Philip, that she loved another; but whom? A light broke through the intense darkness at first of his conjectures, and he recalled to mind Blair, the young officer who had brought her to his mother's; she often spoke of his kindness whilst on board, and hoped, probably vainly, that they might meet again. Adair had judged correctly the tenacity of her character, and in that more than ordinary firmness, read her hopeless and unchangeable affection for this Blair. The idea became fixed in his mind the more he pondered; and, wrapped in his bitter thoughts, he was only startled from them by the opening and re-closing of the door of the next room, and then all was silent. Without once asking himself what he should say in excuse for his presence there, he strode towards it, but it was vacant; Mariam had fled.

He had half intended accusing her about Blair, yet why should he? She had never deceived him; he had hoped for love, where she had alone felt gratitude and kindness.

As he stood thoughtfully looking on the vacant places where the two had sat, something caught his eye on the carpet; he advanced, stooped, raised it—it was the charmed ring; in her haste she had never once remembered it. He held it in his hand—a strange, eager desire overcame him to possess it; it was not quite superstition, but something appertaining to it.

"Mariam," he muttered, "you said you wished I had it; well, at least this desire of yours shall be gratified. I will be

master of this desecrated bauble, and when you love, and are happy—well, then, at whatever cost to myself, I will restore it; and your love, and his, whoever he may be, shall obliterate the stain on this virgin gold."

He placed the ring on his finger, and quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER XIX.

"PASSED away from his memory as if I had never been his 'little sister Kate,'—passed away, and quite forgotten! It is very, very painful to be nothing, where we have been so much. I sometimes wish I had not persuaded my dear father to quit Highgate. I should sometimes have seen him at all events, and that would have cheered my heavy hours of labour—heavy, indeed—without one solacing voice; for now, even, my once too hopeful father has lost all energy of thought, and sits fretful, peevish, and, worse than all, in darkness."

Here the girl, whom our readers will at once recognize, sat perfectly silent, whilst the fingers busily laboured over a sketch before her. "I wish we had not quitted Highgate," she continued, whisperingly, like one who, afraid of the utter silence around, breaks it by speaking aloud. "Yes, I wish we had never quitted the place; for, armed against my own weak heart by the certainty that he loved Miss Lincoln, I should not have been in the danger which might else have proved an overwhelming torrent, down which I should have rushed headlong. What a thorny path in life is the one of unsolaced toil—how the brambles cling to, and wound us, at every step! We labour. Why? For the very life which burdens us! Yet, 'tis a law of nature, to which all bow. A law of nature—so is love; the first—and I have cast it for ever from me!"

Here the thoughts became again silent ones.

Kate, like many a poor weak woman, could not contentedly walk forward in the cold path of duty to Heaven and herself, without almost regretting the brighter one in imagination, where there would be a loving voice to soothe, another to share, and bear even her error. Kate looked scarcely beyond the present hour, and so looking, wept over its solitude, nor thought of the greater reward awaiting the struggle which terminates in victory, and eternal rejoicing.

Poor Mr. Bateman was totally blind, and their poverty alone prevented the operation from being performed, which might, most probably, restore him to sight, and the means of future existence. They were both too proud to solicit from any one, especially from Mr. Gray, the oculist, who had peremptorily told them he could not undertake the case unpaid; and the feeling that this sum, so small to thousands of the rich, stood between him and the light of heaven, made Bateman so nervously irritable, that poor Kate's heart was nearly broken. One thing alone preserved her from a false step, whence only ruin could have ensued; this was wounded pride. Had she imagined Adair for one moment regretting or loving her, she would have flown to him, in all self-confidence and virtuous intentions; but hell is indeed paved with the like; they are ready-hewn stones, only awaiting the pavior's hand.

There were days when her task appeared lighter than upon others, as there are those when the darkness of the soul gives place to calm and peace; and in such she toiled from early morning until almost morn again, to support her father, and, if possible, save a little towards obtaining his restoration of sight. It was a holy task, and a reward awaited it; pity 'tis that too frequently we ourselves turn blessings to curses. Kate had removed to a totally different neighbourhood when leaving Highgate; they were residing in a very humble lodging near Brixton, having left no trace behind them, to direct Adair; at first she had endeavoured to obtain a few pupils, but the payment was not even sufficient for daily bread. After many bitter privations, *she betook her to* her pencil, and here her success was

a trifle more promising. A lady who resided in their house, recommended her to apply to a person likely to give her employment in sketching, principally for the use of schools, as her style was bold and good. To this person, who kept a stationer's shop at the west end, Kate went, and, by the advice of the lady who recommended her, stated her own and father's case. The result was, the purchase and ordering of several clever efforts of her pencil, with the promise of mentioning her case to as many as possible of the charitable, without, however, publishing her name. We will pass over a month, since the day Adair became a forced listener to Mariam's conversation with Sir Philip. The former had endeavoured by coldness, and well acted indifference towards her, to obliterate any impression his last words, at their interview, might have left upon her mind; and no two persons ever more completely deceived their own hearts than Adair and Mariam, when they imagined indifference or apathy had conquered their warm affections. Indifference is unrestrained, natural, and agreeable—*never* sarcastic, as Adair was frequently with Mariam; she, poor girl, suffered silently, without complaining, and, in her darkness, wondered why he should hate her so bitterly, as, without loving, we may be kindly in manner. When violent passions are restrained for awhile in the human breast, they at length find vent in some, too generally crooked, road, leading to destruction.

Thus it happened with Adair; his early taste, which had never quitted him, for the Turf, but only in his short hour of hope lain dormant, awoke in all its vigour; and the heart thought itself perfectly consoled and occupied, when it became like a betting-book, filled with running and winning horses, stakes, odds, hedges, &c. &c. But unfortunately for himself and his career, the winners were generally not on his side of the book; he was far too upright, noble, and rightly proud, to make himself friends of those who, well bribed, would have directed his judgment, full often at fault.

Ruin stood before him, but he pushed past her, and rushed on; so she followed, nothing daunted, in his track. Debt rose

upon debt, like the walls of some new building, which was only rising to crumble to earth with a crash. None knew his embarrassments, not even Ellen suspected their extent; and, in the excitement of this life, Adair found a temporary forgetfulness, or rather callousness, respecting the future fate awaiting his prospects.

This deviation from the subject of Kate was necessary for the better explanation of events which follow.

More than once, in his headlong career, he had thought of her, wondering where she could be: for many an anxious search, on his part, had but ended in disappointment. In seeking her, not one thought of wilful wrong crossed his mind; but he wanted that which the first experience of woman's love in a mother implants in every breast—a woman's heart to share his many annoyances. Men are excellent good fellows in our prosperity and pleasures; but none, not the dearest friend man ever possessed, could stand equal, or compete with woman's sympathetic affection, and soothing watchful care, in sorrow. None, we are certain, will be ungallant enough to deny this, not even the veriest bachelor in existence, unless the lip belie the consistence.

Vainly Adair sought: no one had seen or heard of her. A brief explanation of the necessity of her quitting town, and grateful thanks for their kindness to herself and father, reached the Bruces, and there the clue was lost. Fate walks the world, ever busy in good—good it must be, though not always so to our imperfect insight into futurity; for *all* things are for the best, pre-ordained so; if we turn them to evil, the giver and ordainer is not the less great and just.

One day Adair entered a stationer's to make some purchases; he was in an inner shop, looking over fancy articles displayed there, when a lady, closely veiled, entered the outer one. He was not within sight of the person; but as a voice—a low, gentle one—struck on his ear, he advanced hastily a step: the speaker's back was turned towards him; she was conversing with the master of the shop. One glance sufficed for Adair; the long-sought Kate stood before him! He was on the point

of rushing forward, but a sudden feeling withheld him; it was not pride, for this vice was no part of his nature, if we except the false one which rose out of the virtue of an independent spirit, and caused his separation from Mariam—no, it was nothing of meanness which made him draw back into concealment, before the plainly, almost shabbily-clad girl who stood there; it was a fear of paining her, or causing embarrassment before a stranger. Had he perceived that there existed no prospect, without openly claiming the acquaintance there, of again renewing it more quietly, he would have advanced, but the first words he overheard convinced him that she was no stranger, but one in some manner connected with the interests of the stationer.

"I have brought the sketches," were her words; "I have made some little delay, but my father has been so unwell, that I hope that will plead my excuse."

There was something so saddened, so spirit-broken in the tone, that Adair felt his eyelids moisten—Oh! they are the warmest hearts in men, those which send up the dimness of a tear to the eye, for a suffering woman—those who forget a mother's milk have been nurtured like the young of that fabled bird, which feeds her brood on her blood, and in that red stream they forget all gentler emotion, which makes man love all the sex for his first love's sake—a mother.

"Time enough—time enough—my dear," answered the master of the shop, kindly, to Kate's entreating words; "I am sorry your poor father still continues so poorly."

"He is indeed very ill, and so desponding," was the reply.

They had moved close to the door of the inner room, to avoid being overheard by persons at the counter.

Adair drew back trembling, fearing they might enter where he was; his innate kindness and delicacy made him dread lest the sudden meeting, if unavoided, with himself, might cause her so much emotion, that an unpleasant and injurious impression would perhaps be made on the mind of one who evidently befriended, by employing, her.

However, the evil he dreaded did not take place. After some further conversation, Kate quitted, but not before receiving a fresh order from the stationer, to be completed and brought home in a few days.

Adair had entered this shop by chance, and personally unknown to the master. After making several purchases, he strolled up to the counter, whereon he had noticed that Kate's sketches had been thrown. His first intention was to follow her, then he reflected upon the impossibility of doing so, without creating some suspicion or conjecture in the mind of the man beside him; above all his own desire to see her, rose the unselfish dread of injuring her, so he resolved to trust to that kind chance which had so far befriended him.

Taking up a sketch, he commenced attentively examining it; every line was familiar to his eye, he had so often sat beside her, watching her so employed.

Every touch seemed to recall her more vividly to his memory. There he sat again; one arm round the waist, which, in pure girlish innocence, shrunk not from the brotherly clasp. Then he gradually beheld that vision fade away—a dissolving view; and in its place, growing to life, came the woman's strong love, and his own passionate appeal to her heart, which had nearly yielded to his summons for sympathy of feeling.

"I see, sir, you are a connoisseur," said the man at his elbow, "by the close scrutiny with which you are surveying that sketch; it is boldly and finely executed, and we find little difficulty in disposing of them."

"'Tis indeed a masterly work," answered Adair, startled from his reverie; "some known artist, of course, is the author?"

"As yet, no," was the reply. "It is the labour of a very young lady, toiling for so good a purpose that I will, if you will permit me, sir, give you a slight account of her."

Adair bowed, and the man then informed him of all he so well knew, except the sequel, namely, that her father was totally blind, and she toiling day and night to procure the

forty pounds necessary for the operation to be performed, which should restore him his sight.

"Had you seen this young lady a few weeks since, sir," continued the man, "you could better judge how hard she is toiling to attain her holy purpose; for she is so worn and pale now, that I have difficulty in recognizing her."

No words could convey an adequate idea of Adair's suffering as these revelations reached him; there was a tinge too of remorse. He felt he had partially been the cause of driving her into exile from all who might have befriended her. He was a man of much energy of thought when any circumstance called it into requisition: in a moment his resolution was formed, not to betray to her his knowledge of her position, unless forced by circumstances to do so, lest he should again drive her to sorrow, or further trouble; strong in his good intentions, for all the true nobility of his soul was called into action, he firmly resolved not even to inquire her address; fearful of his own vacillating stability in a good cause, fearful of themselves if they met. He therefore merely contented himself with the purchase of one of the sketches, which would oblige the immediate order of another, as these had been bespoken; and, to avoid the possibility of discovery, he gave a friend's name and address, for the articles he had purchased.

As he quitted the shop, his heart expanded with a secret joy—that joy we feel when a good action has succeeded, perhaps, an erring thought. It is the angel's triumph over the power of darkness. Another idea, too, had taken possession of him, but its accomplishment was more difficult than many will deem probable—this was the sending anonymously a fifty pound note; it was not the manner of sending, but the embarrassment of procuring that sum. There are many who, considered in affluence, will probably fully comprehend his position. Adair was more puzzled to obtain this amount than at one time he would have been to have raised thousands. Debt had long been familiar to him. Some day, he knew, so did his creditors, that all would be paid; meanwhile, horses, carriages, all were

going to the hammer, and, until some fresh sacrifice of property could be made, he was almost penniless, and too proud to appeal to any mere acquaintance's purse for a loan.

As he walked on in a profound study, how he cursed the almost ruin he had brought upon himself, and, in the injustice of his anger, accused poor Mariam; but for his love of her he would never have committed the excesses he had been guilty of. One thing he was firmly resolved upon—*not* to seek Kate. All Adair's noble, generous qualities of heart, had been aroused by the sight of her distress—seeing her, too, he felt how little he really loved her with a passionate love; no, all his sensations were those of an attached brother mourning over a sister's distress. Yet so weak did he know his heart to be, so much did he dread any act which might seem as an ungenerous right, claimed for the service he purposed by some means doing her and his former tutor—that he resolved *all* should be done anonymously; and, to prevent his own weakness from marring the good deed, he would abstain from even inquiring her address, but send it in a letter under cover to the stationer.

With all these good thoughts in his mind, he walked on lighter at heart than he had felt for a length of time, and yet he was pondering on that least pleasantly exciting subject—his embarrassments, and how to overcome them. When we speak of his want of money, it was not the *vulgar* want of wherewithal to buy a coat or hat; no, it was the necessity of a man of fashion, who has half a dozen horses in his stable, but cannot exactly afford a couple of hundred pounds to purchase another which had struck his fancy. Debt was nothing, ready money was the difficulty.

One day, when he and Mariam had been cantering in Rotten Row, a lady passed them on a beautiful horse, black and glossy as jet, sleek as if dripping with water, proud as only a horse looks, or a tall queenly woman in a rage, at some wound inflicted on her pride.

Mariam raved about this animal; this was in *his* hopeful days, *before the late* cruel explanation, and dealer after dealer

was sought to find one like it. She had so handsome an allowance by her father's desire, that few of her wishes were unaccomplishable things as regarded mere money.

After immense toil and scheming, with the aid of one of the best fellows, honest as the sun (which scorches or kills you often with *coup-de-soleil*)—a horse-dealer, Adair had the satisfaction of hearing that the lady had been disgusted with her horse, and was in treaty for another from the same honest fellow. Thus Adair saw himself the optional possessor of the one Mariam had coveted, and he chose it should be his; there was something more consonant to his feelings in lending it to her, than that she should *by right* possess it. There is nothing sweeter, dearer, lovelier, than to give to or oblige those we love.

All his energies had been brought into play to raise three hundred pounds, the price demanded, as from day to day it was expected to be in the market, and he had been promised the first refusal.

When we have chained some one in thought with every link of our existence, though we lose their love irrevocably, we may learn to bear with that; but it is, perhaps, the most painful part of our loss, the severance of every familiar thought in which they lived within us—the very essence of our being. To have been so much *to* them, in our hour of hope, and then not, perhaps,

"Even a passing thought,"

when the cold reality lies exposed to view, is more almost than a stoic could bear unregrettingly. This Adair felt more keenly than all; and, if possible to rivet some links of this broken chain, he endeavoured to possess something of sufficient interest to Mariam to bring them in contact, and create a mutual interest. We grow very childish when we truly love. Love is, *indeed*, well represented as a boy.

All this Adair felt, and feeling thus, by dint of Jewish [redacted]*nce, which* had already become a necessity to him, he

found himself the master of three hundred pounds, and hourly expecting to call the horse his own. All this we detail, to show how really good his heart was—how unselfish in its generosity—and how capable of any sacrifice which another's wants might require. We wish to show all that was truly worthy in Adair, for there may hereafter be much to require redeeming virtues.

As he walked on, pondering about Kate's poor father, and the difficulty of *immediately* procuring the fifty pounds—for this was a case brooking no delay—he suddenly remembered the three hundred pounds in his possession. He also recollected the sacrifices and difficulties he had had in obtaining it, already deeply (as he was) in the Jew's hands; but not for one moment did he hesitate. He knew that if the three hundred pounds were not forthcoming in an instant, another would purchase the horse. He could not ask assistance from Elton, without exposing his whole affairs. Sell his other few remaining horses, would be to acknowledge what he was so anxious to conceal. A glance at all this, and then the noble heart rose far above all selfishness.

"Come what may," he said, mentally, "Kate shall have a hundred pounds. Forty pounds for the operation, and the remainder to keep the poor old man until he recovers his sight. Confound that stingy Gray, the oculist, who would not perform the operation in charity!"

With these thoughts in his mind, lighter at heart than he had of late been, Adair hastened to his banker's, and, without a sigh, drew a hundred pounds. The next step was to send it to her: this he accomplished without much difficulty. Enclosing the notes in a letter, he forwarded them to "Miss Bateman, artist, care of Mr ——, Pall Mall."

In this letter he merely said,—"A person hearing all the circumstances of Mr. Bateman's sad case, encloses the above amount to enable him to obtain the best assistance his case requires, without delay. An acknowledgment of the receipt of the hundred pounds in the *Post* will meet the writer's eye."

The handwriting was too much disguised for Kate to recognize it; and, moreover, two good reasons would act as barriers between her suspicion of him as being the author—the first, his not seeking her abode; the second, the borrowed name he had given the stationer.

The answer his messenger brought him was—"Miss Bateman should receive the letter without delay."

Rejoicing, Adair returned home, to meet a poor reward for his good deed, in Mariam's constrained manner.

CHAPTER XX.

THERE may be those who, reading this book, will feel a sympathetic warmth at heart with Kate when she received this letter. There may be those who have, at some time of their lives, bowed their heads in speechless gratitude before their Maker, awe-stricken at the hand, the Almighty hand, so near above their unworthy heads, showering down gifts of peace, watchful care, and love, possibly at the moment when they were, in their impatience, reviling His want of fatherly affection.

None but such can imagine what Kate felt—she was bowed in self-abasement to earth at her unworthiness, and unthankfully repining against Providence. How many excellent resolutions she made; but, alas! they were built on drifting sand. Not for an instant did she suspect Adair. Personal descriptions are like passports—they suit every body. Kate was told a tall, very dark, young man, had been in the inner shop on the occasion of her last visit, and on coming out admired the sketches. He might have been the sender, yet several had heard the tale of her father's position; so after all this, Captain *Monmouth*, for this was his name, might not be the person.

Kate took the trouble of going closely veiled to the address of Captain Monmouth, and watching his exit, to ascertain whether she had ever met him before. After patiently waiting a couple of hours, a cab drove up, a gentleman jumped out, tall, dark, and a perfect stranger to her; as the cab drove slowly towards the stable, she, once so timid, grown bolder in adversity, followed, and, beckoning the "tiger," placed a *douceur* in his hands, asking, "What is the name of the gentleman who has just entered 10, ——— street?"

"Captain Monmouth," was the reply.

And Kate turned away, uttering a blessing, which certainly did not light upon his head, though directed there, in her error. Her next step was to acknowledge the gift in the *Post*, and then with what a joyous heart, full of hope, she hurried to Mr. Gray's, to appoint a time for her father's operation.

How many good deeds we should do, which we now leave undone, could we fully comprehend the divine privilege awarded us, of descending like a sunbeam into the poor, darkened, desolate heart, lighting it up to joy and thankfulness!

Who might, seeing Kate as she entered Mr. Gray's, recognize in her the pale, sad girl of two days previously? her face was glowing, the eye flashing with hope and gratitude to Heaven and man.

"Mr. Gray," she uttered in the hurry of her joy, when ushered into his presence, "when will you see my poor father? I am so anxious to have the operation performed soon."

"See him," answered the oculist in an abrupt manner, peculiar to himself; "where is the use of my seeing him? but if you wish me to do so, bring him here."

"Will you name your day, if you please?" she asked timidly, awed, despite the independence her hundred pound note gave her, by his manner.

"Tell him to come to-morrow at three," was the answer; "but you spoke of operation—you know my conditions."

"I have the forty pounds here," she cried, joyously, laying

the note before him; "and oh! pray, sir, restore his sight soon."

Mr. Gray took up the note, looked scrutinizingly at it, then fixing his eyes upon her, said, "Where did you get this? You have not earned it, have you?"

Kate briefly related her story.

"Hum," muttered he, as she concluded, then added in a sharp hasty tone—

"A very good tale—very good; but it requires a sequel—there, my dear," and his voice grew rather husky, "put up your hundred pounds. I only wished to see if you really had energy to exert yourself; nothing like making the young labour, whatever their vocation. Besides, I knew you would require every farthing you could save to support your father before he would be quite recovered; nothing like energy—put up your hundred pounds."

"Oh, sir!" she cried, tears rolling down her cheeks, "I did not expect this from you: I—forgive me—accused you of being cold and grasping."

"So do many," was the abrupt answer; "but I work, and have laboured a long life to be what I am: and I choose others to do so, or we should be constantly imposed upon by those who *can* pay, and will not. If your father's eyes had been quite ripe for the operation, however, I should not have left it so long, but they are not."

"God is very, very good!" she exclaimed, looking upwards; "He never deserts us."

"Of course He does not: never forget Him, and He will remember you. Now, go; send your father to-morrow, and take care no one picks your pocket;" and turning his back with seeming indifference, this truly just, good man, rang the bell, and sent her hastily away, to spare her feelings.

With a light step Kate passed down the street, and finding herself in the vicinity of the Burlington Arcade, entered, to shelter herself from the rain, which was beginning to fall; *many others*, too, were hastening in for the same purpose.

There are days in our lives which seem marked by fate wherein to crowd events, as if it felt disinclined to scatter them broadcast over our path.

Kate walked through the arcade with a hasty step, and when she arrived at the Piccadilly end, stepped out, and raised her veil and head, to feel whether it still rained. At that moment a brougham stopped, and from it descended a gentleman. She was far too deeply engrossed with her very happy thoughts of the moment to notice any one, for prosperity to her was once again to mix with the world, and see him who was all the world to her—Richard Adair—with what hopes, she did not stay to inquire. Wrapped in this brown study, she looked upwards at the pouring clouds, but neither to right nor left.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed a man's voice beside her; "surely I am not mistaken—I have the happiness of again meeting Miss Bateman?"

Startled, she turned and faced Sir Philip Montgomery.

"Sir Philip!" she cried, blushing with surprise and annoyance, for her dress was the momentary thought, in its *more* than simplicity; "this is indeed a surprise."

"Not an unpleasant one, I hope," he said blandly. "I do assure you the pleasure to me is great; I have so often inquired of Bruce whither one of our very brightest constellations had shot away."

"My father's health," she uttered, "required strict seclusion; we have been living away from the world, in which I have little inclination now to mingle." A sigh closed this speech.

"Does she love Adair?" was his mental thought, "and has prudence dictated this retirement? I," he continued aloud, "have frequently asked Adair about you, knowing your father had been his tutor, but he pleaded total ignorance of your locality."

As he spoke, he looked keenly at her, and, despite the self-command she endeavoured to call to her aid, the blood rose to the heated cheek, and betrayed her emotion.

"Mr. Adair," she replied, looking down, "has no interest now in seeking my father; his days of tutorship are passed, and"—she hastily added, raising her head with pride, fearful lest her words should imply a neglect of her on Adair's part—"my father's state, the absolute necessity for quiet, obliged me to keep our present address unknown to all!"

"Indeed!" he cried. "Then I may indeed esteem myself most fortunate in meeting you to-day; it is a lost pleiad found."

"But a poor, cold northern star, after all," she answered gaily, to conceal her embarrassment.

"Not cold enough, I hope, to forbid me the pleasure of accompanying her home, and there being introduced to Mr. Bateman."

"Indeed, seriously, Sir Philip, we receive no visitors; pardon my necessary rudeness."

"I pardon all but the pain a positive refusal will inflict. Allow me to call, *not* as a visitor, but one anxious to amuse your suffering parent, if in my power. Believe me, illness and dulness are bad companions; one *thinks* of the grave, the other digs it—pray, allow me to remove pickaxe and spade?"

He thus urged, not from any very great desire to renew his acquaintance with Kate, but feeling that, through her, he might discover if really Mariam's heart were given to Adair, or whether her rejection of himself arose from mere girlish caprice; and there existed a hope, amidst this chaos of thought, which had Mariam for its centre.

Thoughts are certainly too often sympathetic. Kate was dreaming whether Sir Philip might not be a channel through which she could discover the reality of Adair's position with regard to Miss Lincoln; a thing she most anxiously desired to be made acquainted with, before again meeting him. Both started from a reverie which had lasted only a few seconds, but was as an age in intensity.

A few words explained why Kate was out this unpromising day, and, filled with the new-born desire of making Sir Philip

subservient to her curiosity—and yet it deserves a higher name—she, as the rain was descending in torrents, accepted the use of his brougham; declining the scarcely more than implied offer of his company, but permitting him to call at their humble lodging. This, too, she resolved, in a bird's-eye view, aided by woman's wit in emergency, to improve, by removing to better rooms in the same house than those they then occupied. If we would trace all events in our lives to their source, how, amidst many devious windings, we should find the beautiful and perfect unity of thought which pre-ordained and directed them! But we cannot always be brought to acknowledge this whilst yet the water of the stream is running: we blame this, reprehend the other, and *dare* place our own petty judgment in opposition to the Mind above us.

Adair was the machine employed to work out strange events—devious, crooked, and many of so doubtful an import, that we may, before the tale is told, pause and ask by the light of our straitened intellect, "Can this be for good?" But as in every work, mechanical or other, base and ignoble things are of necessity employed, the fair and foul blended, to show that every thing has its use; so in life, sin and sorrow float down our stream, side by side with purity and peace, until, arriving at the fall, one overwhelming, rushing cascade foams over the many rocks beneath, and from the noisy, angry, confused waters, the One whose unerring judgment guided all, raises to himself a pure spirit, predestined, created for his glory, whose white drapery, dripping from that stream, will become silvery robes of gossamer lightness, to waft it to heaven.

Let us then bear this in mind, and, amidst all which it may be our necessity as chroniclers of nature to write down here, see that the evil tends to good, and for holy purposes.

Adair was an agent, and let us not condemn that which may emanate from his generous faults till the tale be told, and then, weighing all fairly in the balance, own that without the dross there could be no refined gold.

As Kate drove *homewards*, softly balanced on the luxurious

cushions of Sir Philip's brougham, a dream floated through her brain; it was a momentary idea, for a veil quickly concealed it from her mind's eye—that veil was Adair—how marry another, loving him?—marry and lose him? No. And the vision melted away, and left only the questioning thought, "Why had Sir Philip been so courteous? Was it mere gallantry, pity, or another feeling? He had never been so attentive to her whenever they met at balls or elsewhere."

The brougham stopped, and away with it rolled all day-dreams when she entered her humble home, richer, it is true, by forty pounds than when she quitted that morning, but as far as ever from the loadstone of her heart—Adair.

The thoughts become so much more intense in darkness, that the once most thoughtless Bateman had become almost a calculating man; and when Kate, to whom the hundred pounds were as thousands, rushed towards him, in breathless joy, to make him partaker of it, the querulous voice commenced reckoning time,—the time they would have to live on it, the many expenses attending upon his operation, even though the act itself would be gratuitous, the possibility of his never recovering, and the time she must lose attending to him, until the poor girl burst into a passion of disenchanted tears, the more violent for the high hope they overwhelmed in her heart; nor was it till he heard the sorrow he could not see, that he too began too feel a hope, a regret for the grief he had caused her, and, above all, a deep gratitude towards Mr. Gray, for he was too worthy, however weak a man, not to be fully sensible of his obligation there. But all his words were unavailing to soothe her; the bitterness of calculating every casualty remained, and the girl, looking round their small dingy room, sighed as she felt, in their circumstances, how more than imprudent it would be to increase their weekly expenses by taking more expensive apartments, merely to receive Sir Philip, who possibly might never call.

Disheartened, sick at heart, she sat next morning in a very *plain cotton* wrapper, neat, but evidently not with any attempt

at coquetry, in the sad-looking room, her drawings before her; for she was hurrying to supply the place of the sketch Adair had purchased, and for that reason her father had accepted the offer of their landlord's son, as escort to Mr. Gray's, that she might work at home in quiet. Her eyes were red; she had been weeping, scarcely knowing why — it was the nervous reaction after the previous day's excitement. Not a day-dream or *couleur-de-rose* thought was in her heart—all was dingy as the rhubard-coloured paper on the walls,—when the sudden stopping of a carriage startled her.

She had forgotten Sir Philip, and sprang to her feet; the impulse was to say, "Not at home," when she beheld him step from his brougham. Then she glanced at her dress, the room—all; and, colouring painfully, stood as if spellbound, incapable of any energetic act, and at that moment he entered. Had he found preparations to receive him, *toilette*, attempt at anything which from their known circumstances he would have felt was unusual, the man of the world would have stood aloof, on his guard; but the perfect want of ceremony before him disarmed suspicion, and one glance at the red eyes, which looked sweet in their sadness, and the hair glossy and golden, but unsymmetrically arranged, spoke volumes of freedom from any thought of enslaving, and Sir Philip took the fair hand gently, and almost affectionately, in both of his, as he smiled on the blushing girl.

Some women looked well *carelessly*, but not untidily, dressed. Kate did. No laced sleeves concealed the white moulded arm, from which the mandarin one hung loose; one curl was behind the tiny ear, as Adair loved to see it; the other had fallen forward, and touched the bosom, heaving with emotion, she felt so much perplexed and agitated; and as he looked, he thought, even in the gay attire of a ballroom, she had never seemed so pretty in his eyes, and involuntarily he felt that assuredly Adair loved this girl, and for her sake slighted Mariam's affection, though circumstances prevented his marrying her. These instantaneous reflections were as certainties in his mind,

and gave rise to a scarcely perfected thought, that he should like, in possessing her, to wound the man to the soul who was master of Mariam's heart, and despised it.

Kate gave a hurried glance round the room, and there, on the hearth, were her father's slippers! Every thing bespoke their poverty, which draws so many incongruous things into the one common sitting-room; it seems the focus of misery, like starving children round scarcely lit embers. Sir Philip's glance followed hers, and he smiled, well pleased at this homely proof of the absence of manœuvring to catch him—him, the rich bird, for which so many twigs were limed. And, drawing a chair near hers, he commenced with gentle, easy familiarity conversing on indifferent subjects, to give her time to collect herself, and he also turned his back on the offending slippers, and shut them from her view.

CHAPTER XXI.

KATE was a girl of much energy in emergencies—much good, laudable pride, which forbids a heart's treason to betray that which the cold world ought not to be made acquainted with. From the few words on the subject which dropped from Sir Philip's lips during the first quarter of an hour they sat together, she felt assured that for some motive, not quite clear to her mind (she did not possess enough vanity to suppose herself the cause), he was anxious to discover something relative to the state of Adair's feelings; and honest woman's pride said to her heart, "Lie still, nor betray me by one hurried beat." Schooled, she replied calmly to all he seemed desirous of knowing; and, whilst he deemed himself cleverly attaining his purpose through the ingenuousness of an unsuspecting girl, Kate was weighing every word he uttered, and,

perfectly on her guard herself, came at last to this true and unhesitating conviction, that Sir Philip loved Mariam Lincoln, and the cruel fear followed in shivering garb, that Adair, too, bowed before her. Then came the question, "Whom does she love?—that cold, calculating girl!"

Cold and calculating she must have seemed in Kate's thought, to slight the love of such a being as Adair; for Sir Philip's words implied as much, and that Miss Lincoln, incapable of real affection, was awaiting the possible chance, with her beauty, of a ducal coronet. How Kate at that moment hated her, so truly to be pitied, had she known all! Closing her heart on hope, where she had once hoped so much, a bitter feeling of uneasy research arose as to how she might best pain and triumph over her rival. This very sensation made her calm in outward seeming; for hatred and revenge checked the warm blood's flow, like Winter's outstretched hands over a babbling stream, silencing its joyous sunlit prattling.

Her composure of manner puzzled her companion, who piqued himself upon much acuteness of observation, and he left, firmly convinced that whatever feeling had existed, or did exist, towards her on Adair's part, she felt only that kindly, gentle one for him which an affectionate heart might cherish for the one who had shared her childish hours of joy.

Before he quitted, he had so completely put Kate at ease with himself, that she laughingly called his attention to the ill-concealed slippers, and in a perfectly composed manner pointed out with much humour all the poverty of her rhubarb-garnished apartment.

"I crept from my shell awhile at night," she said, "like a rambling moon-loving snail, to compare my circumscribed home with the splendour of the world of luxury, and now I have returned again, drawn in my horns, and am quite satisfied."

"And contented?" he asked. "Surely you must feel a desire sometimes to revisit scenes where you were so much prized, and now regretted?"

"By whom?" she said, looking calmly in his face; and yet the bosom heaved with a hope that he might have heard a regret uttered by the only one whose thought of her could in any way pain or please.

"Need you inquire, Miss Bateman? Take my extreme pleasure in meeting you once more as the echo of every heart which has known you."

"An echo," she replied, laughing with perfect ease, "must be born of a sound; who ever expressed their deepest woe?"

"I did, Bruce did, young Adair did, in my hearing one evening to a friend; for you passed away from us after the last ball where we met, like a wreathed mist at morn, clad in white robes."

"You are quite poetical, Sir Philip," was the reply, "and have employed a poet's licence in your thoughts, for I was wreathed, as you express it, in pink *couleur-de-rose*, which I cast off from that day;" an almost imperceptible shade crossed her brow.

"She regrets some one," thought he, "but whom? It cannot be Adair; her manner of speaking of him is too composed."

"I thank your kind feeling for all you express," she continued; "for that spoke to you, perhaps, of a girl's sorrowing over scenes of pleasure and happiness. The two do not always meet; but Richard Adair, knowing all our circumstances so well, must have guessed and approved the motive of my withdrawal, therefore his surprise astonishes me."

"Surely you would not have him indifferent to all your actions, Miss Bateman?"

"Dear me! no," she answered, looking full and smilingly in his face, "for we have known each other so well and long; he is ever associated in my mind with the latter days of childhood—those happy days when we loved so well those who have lived and learned with us; for learning then is a pleasure, we appreciate so much the honey which we are storing in our mind's cell for a wintry day. I am most sincerely attached to *Richard* Adair."

"She cannot love him, and speak thus!" he thought.

"Oh heavens!" whispered the woman's soul. "How utter so little, feel so much, and not suffocate with base hypocrisy!"

"Do you know Miss Lincoln?" was his immediate question.

The suddenness of it nearly startled the guarded girl into tremulousness, but compressing the lip imperceptibly for a moment, she replied with perfect composure,—

"By sight only. I have seen her frequently, but never was presented to her. I believe Miss Lincoln is engaged—is she not—to Richard Adair?"

She was not consummate actress enough to look up unmoved, as she uttered this; she leaned over her sketch, anxiously awaiting his reply.

The man's voice trembled so much, as he answered hastily, in ignorance of the fact, that Kate involuntarily raised her eyes, and fixed them on the cheek so flushed and excited before her; no one could mistake the emotion depicted there.

A very bitter, unworthy feeling arose in Kate's heart—one of mere jealousy of the girl who thus won all—for there was the internal conviction that Adair, even whilst he had wooed herself, was not quite indifferent to Mariam; and, for the first time, she resolved, if man might be won, to win Sir Philip. Many conflicting thoughts urged her to this. Mariam she never for a moment imagined to be in love with Adair; for if so, why not marry him? Possibly she might be attached to Sir Philip, she had so often danced with him in Kate's presence; and, attributing to the supposed rival a petty feeling of which Mariam was incapable, she thought her possibly in love with Sir Philip, but withheld from marrying him by more ambitious hopes. That *he* was not indifferent to her, was certain by his present emotion; under any circumstance, it would be one detached from her car. What a base mother jealousy is, she gives birth to so many paltry ideas!

Kate cordially hated Mariam; and, had Sir Philip been a good reader of those acts emanating from a heart's resolve, he would have comprehended some vigorous resolution, taken on

the part of the girl before him, who, pushing away the sketch her fingers had been so engaged with, exclaimed proudly, her whole bearing changed, as she broke the silence of a moment, after his professed ignorance of Adair's engagement to Mariam,—

"Pardon my teazing you, Sir Philip, about the affairs of a lady so perfectly a stranger to me as Miss Lincoln; but attribute it solely to the interest, *that in truth* of a sister, which I take in Richard Adair. I should like to know him well and worthily married."

"Indeed!" he exclaimed, recovering the usual calmness of his manner, which had been momentarily ruffled by the thought of Mariam's engagement to another.

"Do you know, Miss Bateman, I once *almost* imagined (pardon my saying so much to you, nearly a stranger) that *more* than a boy and girl love existed between Adair and yourself."

Excessive pride had nerved Kate to all.

"Richard and myself!" she exclaimed, in well-feigned surprise, looking unblushingly in his face, and laughing, "I should as soon dream of whirling in a magic circle with Mr. Elton, and Cupid for our axis!"

Sir Philip smiled faintly; the girl no longer interested him: of marriage he had no thought now whatever. He had sought her, hoping through her medium to discover something of Mariam; her ignorance made her acquaintance valueless: and in this mood he took a cold leave, not, however, without soliciting permission to call again on his return from Brighton—whither, he said, he purposed going to-morrow. This, too, was an excuse to escape, in as gentlemanly a manner as possible, from the almost necessity of renewing his visits. Thus they parted, and to mere ordinary sight a fair bet might have been made that they never would meet again unless accident favoured them; but there is more in the world than chance—there is fate.

Kate read the destruction of her half-formed hopes in his *cold farewell*; for the tongue may speak kindly, the hand press

yours, but the eye is truth's delegate, and is alone to be trusted by those who can well read it.

She saw he did not care about calling again, and, woman-like, blamed her careless toilette, bad-looks, *entourage* of rhubarb-papered walls, a bad frame for a fair picture, and, lastly, poor Bateman's slippers; consequently, when he returned, she was in no amiable mood, and well-nigh unkind to the poor blind man.

But Kate had a good heart, and by the time their homely meal was over she had regained her equanimity; dismissed for awhile Sir Philip, and, her arms around her father's neck, anxiously inquired every word of hope Mr. Gray had spoken.

When, however, lone night came, and she lay in unquiet thought on a sleepless pillow, she asked herself, "How did I offend Sir Philip to-day? for in an instant his manner changed."

A little vanity answered the question; he was piqued by a suspicion of her affection for Adair.

This solaced her, for she felt, if he cared enough already about her to be jealous, he would return; the fit over, and comforted, she at last fell asleep—a wearying, feverish sleep; the opiates of which were ambition, jealousy, revenge, and not one grain of affection for him she so ardently desired to attract.

It would seem Kate was a true prophetess; and yet, fate alone was the agent which directed Sir Philip's brougham to Brixton two days later.

When he quitted Kate the first time, with the indifferent tone of a man careless of all, he asked himself, "Where shall I dine?—at home? No, I am in no mood for my own dull society. At my club? yes."

So thither he drove, and dined with the last man he expected to find desultory, and bored like himself—Richard Adair.

We have seen that the latter was no stranger to Sir Philip's attachment to Mariam, and its strange result. A mixture of pity for the rejected man, who looked so wretched, and a *little* curiosity, induced Adair to hold out a hand and say—"Let us

dine together, as we are both on club dinner bent; have you come for the turtle and venison of our bill of fare?"

"Not I; I did not know that such a *cuisine* awaited me when I came in; and you?"

"Not a bit of it; I dropped in for a quiet cutlet and sherry. I am sick of huge unmeaning dinners, where you must sit three hours, and poison yourself like a *rat de cave* from sheer spite, because they've caught you in a trap."

And so the two diamonds sat *vis-à-vis*, each trying to cut through his neighbour's window, and let in a little sunlight to illuminate his mental darkness on one all-absorbing subject —Mariam.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Poor little black girl!" as Adair had called her, could she but have dreamed of the deep interest he took in her—she, so very lowly in her estimation of self; but thus it is, the humble are indeed as "streams flowing o'er golden mines," modest in their murmurings; the proud, as noisy billows, concealing, in their rush and foam, the rocks and weeds beneath. Could she have read Adair's heart, as Sir Philip strove by many tortuous ways through it to discover its secret thought, and how that heart hugged her image, however cold his hope of a requital. But false reasoning, which full often leads us into gross error, bade her despair; so the sat herself down, resolved to be miserable, and, drawing a veil before her eyes, lived in darkness.

Adair had by nature most buoyant spirits; now they were forced;—still none but himself knew the counterfeit. He rattled on on all subjects; spoke of Mariam as "an eccentric girl—one whom he never would marry even if she loved him; *one he thought* incapable of great affection—a flirt" (which

means a heartless girl of the world), to whirl in a waltz all night, and lay aside, like the faded myrtle sprig from your *boutonnière* before going to rest, lest her soul-speaking eyes should lighten between you and it, dancing, *ignis fatuus* like, to lead you onward to some quagmire.

"He is mistaken," thought the self-deemed sorcerer, Sir Philip; "she loves *him*, and he——"

Adair's next sentence solved the question.

"Talk of a girl now, all soul and feeling," he said, enthusiastically; "there was little Kate Bateman. I dearly loved that girl, and, hang it! I fear rather more than as a mere playmate. I wonder where she can be hiding! Have you ever, Sir Philip, in all your wanderings, seen her?"

Sir Philip said quite falsely and indifferently, "No," well assured the other was ignorant of her residence, and likely to continue so; and, in consequence of this conversation and its impression upon him, two days saw him once more driving to Kate's humble cottage, the triumphant thought spurring him on that Adair would give much to know the address which he had half intended never again profiting by the knowledge of; and if Mariam's love for Adair had made her to slight himself, he might possibly wring his, Adair's, heart, by bearing off Kate's affection and herself. When we are too self-confident in our own powers of discernment, what grievous errors we commit! Thus he reasoned—thus he was led blindfolded to the feet of a girl who only made him a stepping-stone across a stream, where bright green fields beyond wooed her wishes—those fields represented Richard Adair.

Sir Philip was much gratified at the reception he met with from Kate; and in the belief that she must have known and rejected Adair's affection—else why this concealment of her residence from him?—he felt deeply flattered by the pleasure which beamed in her eyes, and *now* evinced no alarm at any intended pitfall to entrap him as he noticed the evident care bestowed upon her own *toilette*, and the embellishment, as far as it might be embellished, of her dingy room.

One visit succeeded another. Sir Philip was not in the least in love, but there existed a certain charm in their meetings; the one, where a man believes himself to be an object of interest to a nice girl.

There was much, too, in Kate which pleased him. He was, though so young a man, one of the old school in propriety of thought as regards woman's conduct. She so firmly refused in any way to commit herself by the slightest imprudence of behaviour, that it enhanced any little favour of friendship doubly; not that he sought to lead her astray, but men do not always *grasp* at first sight any slight dereliction from strict correctness of conduct, as women do, until placed in evidence before them, and *then* they doubly admire the one who has avoided the scandal. Girls, too, like Kate, who may have once *nearly* forgotten all, become infinitely more guarded than the one who never could for an instant have nurtured a dream of error.

Sir Philip was passionately fond of horse exercise, especially with a fair companion. Vainly he implored Kate to accompany him; a decided "no" was her reply. Nothing daunted, he at last gained his point by presenting her to a married lady, a distant relative of his own, living apart from the gay world of London, near Putney, and to whom he related Kate's sad history of toiling for a blinded father.

Nothing more was needed to enlist a good sterling English heart in the girl's favour, and, propriety satisfied, Kate was only too happy to canter round all the outskirts of town, with Sir Philip and his cousin for her companions; for the retiring taste of this lady made a ride in Rotten Row not to be dreamed of—we must acknowledge, to the other's annoyance; for, as one only thought guided her every wish, her suburban rides drew her not within the chance of meeting Adair.

Amidst her other and pleasurable occupations, let it not be supposed for an instant that she forgot her poor father, on whom the operation had been successfully performed, but who [illegible] *still the* tenant of a darkened room; and it was only to

steal a few hours of fresh air and exercise, that his child consented to quit her watchful care of him. Neither did she neglect their means of existence; for hours in the day, the busy fingers plied the pencil in her sketchings. She was really a good girl, and the charitable must make some excuses for one, left so early to the sole care of a most unworldly and unguarded parent, who even now saw no danger, asked no questions, about the most daily visits of a man of fashion like Sir Philip.

Strange as it may seem, this man had not, as yet, uttered one word of love—scarcely gallantry—to Kate. Insensibly they became intimate friends—she looked for his coming—hailed it without even a blush; and he sat down as naturally on the little black horsehair sofa as if she were a sister. More than once he had been on the point of confiding all to her about Mariam, but something of shame withheld him. Still he loved to speak of her to Kate, and this without a suspicion or dread of inflicting pain, so brotherly was his intercourse with her; and both had a mutual thought, though of course directed towards different objects, in so much seeking one another. Sir Philip had an aim, which will be hereafter seen, in inducing her to accompany him on horseback; and her idea in consenting was, as we have said—all Adair.

Kate, it will be remembered, laboured under the impression that Adair was in ignorance of her present movements; and, consequently, as Sir Philip's visits and attentions, though so seemingly platonic, increased, an anxious, nervous feeling absorbed every thought—this was to see Adair again, and discover if really he were perfectly indifferent to her; in which case, should Sir Philip ever become a suitor, she assuredly would not refuse him, *not* from a mercenary motive, but a neglected woman's pride of heart.

If in Adair's heart she should find one responsive beat with hers, away to the winds would she cast Sir Philip, with all his wealth and title, and, let what might happen, live for Adair's love. For days this desire of meeting him marred all rest. How accomplish it? To write and solicit it would never do—

he would come prepared—and then how judge his indifference or joy? It must be by Chance. She implored, and that busy dame heard her prayer. It was again at the stationer's, whither she often went to carry her orders, and *he* frequently called to inquire (after some purchase made) about "that poor Miss Bateman," first assuring himself she was not in the inner shop.

One day—an unfortunate one for Kate's hopes—he looked in *en passant*, gave an order, and asked how Miss Bateman's poor blind father was progressing towards light. We say it was an unfortunate day for wilder hopes than mere friendship; for on it, Mariam (grown less cold towards him, and touched by the purchase by him of the horse she had coveted, though not giving him entire credit for the motive of that purchase) had given an almost cordial consent to mount it, and accept his escort. This was an immense step gained by him; for she had been so icy cold towards him and all of late, that he felt like an ethereal being, from whose wings the slough of some penitential sojourn on earth had been washed away by a dew from heaven.

In this mood, filled with thoughts of Mariam, in charity with all the world, even Angelina—whom he had escorted to the school door of the church, promising to take her on his arm to a charity sermon the following Sunday—of course to be preached by Narcissus; thus in charity with all, love for but one, he stepped into the shop—purchased stationery—inquired about Kate—stepped out again—and a dozen yards from the door met the girl herself. She shrank back, and grew pale and trembling; she dreaded him, and herself.

Adair uttered an exclamation, and then, grasping both her hands, cried, whilst a bright, joyous glow lit up his face,—

"My darling Kate, how rejoiced I am to see you again, and looking so well!"

The words were very kind—none could surpass them in that feeling; but that alone they were. The glow on the cheek was friendship's—the clasp of the hands a brother's; there was no

intonation which kept back the gushing words, and yet betrayed more than they could have expressed; there was no thrill, no lip whose quivering made the speech incoherent. *All* was said as felt, and the all almost bade the tears of bitter disappointment roll down her cheeks. She had been incapable of more than, "O Richard!"—but how much those two words said of feeling.

"And are you still in the old place?" he inquired, drawing her hand beneath his arm.

"Oh, no!" she replied in surprise, partially recovering herself, "you know we left Highgate long ago."

"Yes, I know that of course, you naughty girl, for writing me so unkind a letter; but are you still at Brixton?"

A cold shudder crept over her: had he known her address, and never been?

"What do you know of Brixton, and our residence there, Richard?" she asked, looking up in almost agony in his face.

"This, dear," and he smiled gently down on the upturned face, "that you are living there, toiling for your poor blind father, who is, however, thank Heaven! in a fair way of recovering his sight."

"Come back," she cried abruptly, turning round. "I must call at Mr. ——," naming the stationer.

"Never mind now," was the embarrassed reply; "you can call another time about your sketches." He was betraying himself.

"Richard!" she exclaimed, while her voice shook with her internal suffering, "*you* sent me one hundred pounds—you represented yourself as Captain Monmouth!"

"Was it not a good joke?" he replied, laughing; "you can forgive me now, for it benefitted your poor father, and I know your pride would not permit you to accept it from me."

"Why not?" she whispered, her voice was so weak and low.

"Oh, because, because—never mind, Kate—because you are a little goose!"

"And you have known my address for weeks, and never called!"

He looked confused, but candour conquered all embarrassment.

"Not weeks, dearest Katty. I did not, on my first visit to the stationer's, inquire it; I thought it better for both our sakes,—we were led once into so foolishly childish a position."

"True," she responded, in a cold, calm tone; "therefore you had better not call even now."

"Well, perhaps not yet. I should like a chat with you; I should like to see poor Bateman, too, so——"

"He is not permitted to see any one," she hurriedly answered; "and I must leave you now, Richard, for I am in a great hurry to return to him."

He stopped. "Well then, dearest Katty, I shall call some day when I think he is visible, and recovered. Poor Bateman! and keep your heart and good looks, for I shall expect a joyous welcome to reward me for my self-denial in keeping away."

"Good bye," she uttered, scarcely able to speak.

"God bless you, Kate!"

A pressure of the hand, and one went to left, the other right. When would they meet again, and how?

CHAPTER XXIII.

On a fine sunny day in Rotten Row, and this is how it occurred.

Since the day of the last conversation we have detailed between Richard and Mariam, a mutual avoidance of one another had been the result; he, from a conviction that her affections were given elsewhere, ceased seeking her society,—what avails casting our wealth of love on a land where the seed has already been sown, the goodly wheat in ear? He was not yet sufficiently reconciled to the thought of losing her, to sink down into a mere brotherly quietude; and, until such could be, he sought oblivion amidst reckless and gay companions.

Though a state like this may beguile the heart awhile, and lure it into temporary indifference, it arouses from its slumber, strengthened in the real, disgusted with the false; and this awakening brought Adair once again to Mariam's side.

We will not speak of *her* feelings. She was struggling with a half-unconquered nature to learn calmness, charity, meekness and forgiveness—difficult lessons where the young heart has to study them without support, or, far worse—hope.

Mrs. Adair, urged on by Angelina, who, with the acuteness of her acrid nature, had fathomed Mariam's heart sufficiently to read its distaste for the society of all those about her who were aspirants for her hand, had commenced, to the poor object, a perfect persecution as regarded her settlement in life, as folks term it, which too frequently means a total subversion of our every comfort and tranquillity. Mariam asked only peace, and found herself hurried from scene to scene of so-called gaiety, wherein her weary heart took no part.

Her disgust arose from so many causes: on the one hand, Adair's animadversions about her colour made every attention seem almost an insult; on the other part, Angelina took especial

care to instil into her mind the thought that, "with her fortune," she might marry well. Poor girl! she would not have minded this, had not the other so much urged the case with her mother, that Mrs. Adair, as her guardian, insisted upon her seriously thinking of it. Moreover, Captain Lincoln, having had a great notion about the happiness of early marriages, made it an especial clause in the will that Mariam should marry before she attained her seventeenth year; and with one only idea, and, to her imagination, a hopeless one, in her heart, she was forced to look upon the possibility of being urged, almost coerced, by the guardian of her father's insane choice, into some union perfectly distasteful to her. In truth, this worldly-called "happiest of creatures," with youth, beauty, and wealth at command, was a very wretched girl, full of worldly cares, which made her young heart grow old with aching—old and worn, as if long years had passed over it.

In this mood Adair returned to her side, and with a kindness of manner which almost made her forget all in her mind against him; he came, too, with an offer which spoke of a thought of her which puzzled and almost surprised her again into that dream of affection, where two sip in unity and unchecked con-confidence from the same charmed chalice, charmed and sacred from worldly dregs of adulterated wine. It is so difficult to keep anger in our heart against its sole occupant; 'tis warring against nature, for nature is love; and what is life without affection! 'Tis simply existence without consciousness — a mesmeric sleep, dreamless and unnatural.

Adair came in smiling peace, and Mariam's heart borrowed light to cheer her darkness, from his smile; and when in the frank off-hand manner, peculiarly his own, he told her he was master now to offer her the horse her fancy had been set upon the possession of, she looked up in his bright unclouded hazel eye, and read so much gentle feeling towards herself, that it needed all the stubborn pride of a too susceptible nature to darken her mind to the fact of his love.

Thus, hoping on his part, lulled almost to dreaming on hers,

they started for a quiet country ride, to try the paces of the new acquisition to his stud; and having passed a couple of the happiest hours either had known for some time, yet wherein no one word beyond mere friendship had been spoken, they by habit, more than choice, returned through Rotten Row, and cantering full of new joy to both, we will leave them, and take a peep on this same day at Kate Bateman and Sir Philip, who were taking a quiet ride, also *tête-à-tête* for a wonder, and by one of those chances, thrown like rocks in our path, over which we too frequently stumble and break, or are broken, from our vain efforts to avoid them; and this is what is called predestination.

Sir Philip's cousin, when he called for her *chaperonage* on this day, was ill, indisposed, or cross, and quite unable to accompany them in their usual ride, so he, disappointed, turned off towards Brixton; nevertheless, with a faint hope that, when Kate should learn all, she might be tempted to infringe her previous resolution, and accompany him *sans chaperon*.

We are but mortal, whatever temptations assail us, and the taking a quiet ride with Sir Philip was too simple an affair for her to take great precautionary safeguards against it. He urged, and she consented; for, when he arrived, her hat was on her head, her whip in her hand, and his groom leading her horse before the door. To take off hat and habit, put on a quiet homely dress, and sit down to work, or, worse still, pass the lovely, sun-brightened hours in her father's darkened room, where she had been patiently talking to amuse him all the morning, were things beyond Kate's very human powers, so she listened to Sir Philip's.

"What on earth *can* be the harm of a *tête-à-tête* ride with me? and not that either—my groom accompanies us; we have so often been seen with my quiet cousin, *en tiers*, and just about our pleasant lanes; *do*, my dear Miss Batemen!"

And five minutes more saw Kate and her tempter in a social canter up the road.

But this was not Sir Philip's object and intention. He knew, for he had seen her there every day, that Mariam was almost certain to be in the park, either alone under her groom's care, or with Elton, who was a chosen cavalier of hers. Sir Philip's latent desire to urge her into some emotion burst into life the moment he found his cousin would not accompany them.

All went merry as a marriage bell; for Kate could not possibly withstand the possible triumph, at whatever cost to her fame, of meeting Adair thus escorted. Both she and Sir Philip were more than gratified in their prayers; for in the first turn towards Kensington Gardens they met Mariam and Adair, and just as these two were within twenty yards of the others, after many a devious track through the tangled mazes of her susceptibility, Adair had won Mariam to promise that, on the morrow, she would take an early walk in the Zoological Gardens, and there, amidst the birds, beasts, and insects, permit him to dive into the recesses of her mind, and if possible discover *la mouche qui l'avait piquè* of late, into so much coldness and estrangement.

If—is there in the whole vocabulary of languages a word of more active cruelty than this? We find ourselves on the point of attaining all we desire on earth, and two letters, and their signification, pass like a cloud between us and the sun of our hope.

If Mariam had not acceded to Adair's solicitation for "just one turn more," all might have been well—all cleared up; much pain spared to both—pain, and sin, and sorrow, perhaps.

As it was, they took "one turn more,"and just as her eyes, in velvet softness and half-subdued fire, were raised from her saddle-bow to his, bent down in earnestness upon her—even yet, whilst the full pouting lip uttered "I will go to the gardens with you"—two equestrians met them, and she who had cast all thought of Kate to the winds, and every thing *but the blind* hope within her, saw Adair colour, start, and

almost too much troubled to return the salute of the others, as he exclaimed,—

"Merciful Heavens! Kate and Sir Philip—alone together! What can it mean? Is she mad?"

How little short of absolute lunacy it is to permit a hasty and biassed judgment of others to act as a guide to our actions; and yet we always do, and too generally believe uncertain conjectures as firmly as if they were registered facts before our eyes!

Of the four meeting not one judged truly of his or her neighbour's heart.

Mariam did not read in Adair's start and visible pain the dread lest poverty had been too sore a trial to an almost sister to him, and Kate tottering on a brink of ruin.

Sir Philip's vanity (all have some) whispered, that the almost haggard look which in a moment shadowed over Mariam's face was a lingering regret for her hasty conduct towards himself, arising probably from a spoilt favourite's love of trifling with those who love us. We need not speak of what she really felt; the reader may look into her heart, which we have bared to view, and judge. But of all, but one felt elated with joy—this was Kate.

"So," she mentally said, "he can feel my being with another still; yet he trifles with and disdains my love! If woman's act may follow on the footsteps of her ardent will, Sir Philip's wife shall make his heart ache; yet I despise the man!"

And woman's will went hand in hand with the act which placed her trembling fingers in Sir Philip's palm before they reached home, as she uttered,—

"I have nothing to refuse you, Sir Philip; your kindness to a poor girl will win you a loving wife."

For a moment she was sincere in the generous thought, then came the demon's prompting in her heart, that through him she might yet bend Adair.

Sorry reflection to commence the uphill journey of matrimony with, when we only place revenge or empty triumph at the summit; not a husband's heart to win.

Sir Philip married her in madness, for he could find no tangible or plausible reason. He felt it would wound Mariam and Adair; he thought so, was *almost* certain of it, but he scarcely cared. After all what was it? He was rich; Mariam was nothing to him, never would be, yet she was exacting enough to feel annoyed at his attentions to another. Kate was pretty, and all said, What was it?—*only* matrimony.

And the thing was thus undertaken lightly and unadvisedly, long before the clergyman, in surplice white, should beseech them not to do so.

Could each have known the joy their marriage would give Adair and Mariam, how different would their feelings have been—how different their union, had it taken place! Now we must note facts.

Mariam found a reason, before reaching home, to decline Adair's escort to the Zoological next day, and he accepted it more resignedly than he otherwise would have done, had his good generous heart not been filled with fears for Kate, and projects how to save her, which must be at once undertaken. Full of this idea, he thoughtfully lifted Mariam from her horse; and, scarcely saying adieu, hastened to his club, the Pandora box in which a man rummages full often without finding what he most requires in many of life's stages—a friend to counsel, a hope to serve him as lamp on a dark road.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ADAIR found pens, ink, and paper; and with these he indicted a letter, not "writ with bitter words," but in all affectionate anxiety, to Kate. This he laid on the table before himself, and then sat down to ponder on the most advisable manner of conveying it. "If I call," he thought, "there will be tears and protestations of good intentions; she will convince me against my own judgment whilst with her, and I shall leave her to laugh at me, and perhaps hurry down the downward path, where, it may be, she now pauses. No! I will write—letters are read—re-read—pondered upon—acted upon: I will write!"

So he sealed the missive, wherein he implored, as a loving brother, that she would for his sake pause; for the sake of that affection existing between them, so pure and perfect. But to this affection she would not have subscribed; feeling it far less sisterly than he could wish it to be, it ranked as an abortion in her sight.

However, it mattered little what he had written; even though in the letter he besought a meeting, not liking to intrude where he might possibly be *de trop* with Sir Philip, for Kate never received the letter!

There is no situation much more disagreeable and trying to the patience, than to be at the tender and conscientious mercies of a maid of all work in a lodging-house!

The maid at Brixton in nowise varied from her species. She wore unlaced boots, in which she was always tripping herself up or down stairs. If a ring came to the garden gate, it might be the boy for the paper, or the butcher, or the milk; in short, she provided for all contingencies, by carrying half a dozen things to the door with her. Thus, when the postman

brought Adair's letter (Kate was out, or her quick ear might have heard the name asked for), the girl took it in, and the milk at the same time, and, falling up the steps into the house, drenched the one in the other! What was to be done? dry it? yes; so before the fire she placed it, like the toast on the footman; a coal fell out; she was in the back kitchen; one corner was burned, and "Lawk!" she exclaimed, "I'm sure miss gets enough without this!"

Having no dream of all *one* letter may contain, more than hundreds might purchase, in the joy it brings, she cast it into the fire, and turned away, singing a rough imitation of "I have sent back every token," in perfect ignorance of Colonel Maberly's ubiquity of vision in all postage matters, which might some day bring to light the fate of this over-lit letter.

Adair waited, watched, hoped for some days; and, no reply arriving, even his kind heart grew selfishly indifferent.

"Why should I worry myself about one who cannot appreciate my anxiety enough even to reply to it? so let her now act as she deems best."

Reader! we would, as far as our power enables us, extract a moral from every act we place before you, that at the termination a little bouquet of home-truths may be gathered. See in this how coldly we follow up the interest of others; we commence all anxiety, a breath extinguishes the frail taper, and we leave them to plunge in darkness alone. We have done our duty, we imagine, in the one effort, but this may not perhaps be so reckoned to us; we should *persevere* in a good cause, and let our zeal be nothing daunted by another's personal blindness or ingratitude. Do not let us have, in self-accusation, to say after some evil has arisen—"*If* I had done so and so, all would have gone well."

Let us do all—leave nothing undone; *then*, if we fail, our conscience will have no "if" to fright us with.

Adair forgot all about Kate, Sir Philip, and everything connected with them in a steeplechase, but only for awhile, and during that while they were not *in statu quo*.

We will now look into Mrs. Adair's morning room of ladies' litter, and work, and—scandal, *cela va sans dire.*

Mariam—poor, dull, lonely, susceptible Mariam—sat there, working something, and bearing the allusions, questionings, and urgings of Mrs. Adair, Mrs. Bruce, and Agelina. Let not the world look coldly on this poor girl, as on one stupidly incapable of seeking or accepting her own happiness; but on one, the most cruelly afflicted of Heaven's creatures from a too keenly sensitive mind, which turned all to dross from want of confidence in herself, or her power of inspiring affection. She had none to love—no, not one. Leah she dreaded now opening her heart to, since the woman's whispered murder. Mrs. Wilton was continually lecturing her about Sir Philip, and closing her heart there. Oh, how she had clung to Adair's affection! she would have been content with it even as a brother's; but to be nothing to him but an object of contempt, or an incomprehensible plaything, for she was still endeavouring to understand his motives of action towards herself.

"Well, Mariam," continued Mrs. Adair, taking up the thread of a previous discourse; "of course, I cannot *force* you to marry; but you are well aware of the nature of your father's will and wishes, and these latter should, at all events, act as stimulants to a dutiful daughter."

Mariam was silent, but she sighed.

"I declare, mamma," sneered Angelina, "you treat the case *quite* medicinally; one would fancy you were prescribing a *blister.*"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gently laughed Mrs. Bruce; "you are not far from the truth in your expression. Miss Adair's marriage *certainly* is an irritant—how far beneficial, *I* am not competent to judge."

She quite forgot that her call that morning had been premeditated between herself and Mrs. Adair, to talk Mariam into matrimony. Women have positively a little saltpetre and gunpowder in them; they must all turn to match-making, and then too, unfortunately, they are quite as prone to lend their

aid in breaking what they took so much trouble in combining.

"Really," answered Mrs. Adair, nodding her head affirmatively, and with conviction, "you are quite right, my dear friend; for how few marriages are truly happy!"

Mariam's presence and case were in an instant forgotten, in the love of pursuing a favourite theme—the tyranny of husbands.

"Few—none!" responded Mrs. Bruce. "Now, there's Bruce; he passes in the world for a model husband, and, I am sure, a greater wretch in many things never existed!"

"I was certainly fortunate," sighed Mrs. Adair; "for though so great a disparity existed between us, and, far more, though Adair was *not* the man my young heart chose, a better husband never existed; he was one never to be replaced."

Mrs. Bruce looked up, amazed for a moment, having so often heard him very differently spoken of; and then, knowing well her dear friend's character, set it down to the caprice of the instant: but this it was not, but pure vanity, which prevented her acknowledging calmly, reflectingly, that any one could do other than love her, and be her slave. Angelina and Mariam, as if by mutual consent, kept perfectly still and silent.

"Ah, well!" said Mrs. Bruce, you were a favoured mortal; for of all my acquaintances, I know not one who would not rejoice in her freedom to-morrow; and certainly I think divorces are most unfairly granted *only* on certain grounds. *I* would make bad temper, and unreasonable exactingness, all-sufficient grounds!"

A smile flitted over Mariam's sad face.

"Adair had a sweet temper!" fell from his loving relict: "and a less exacting, more indulgent, man never existed!"

"It is a pity the worms have him!" answered Mrs. Bruce, with asperity; "they must feel compunction in picking the bones of so excellent a man! But," she added, changing her tone, "they will have a change of diet when Bruce dies!"

"And he appears so kind, though a little rough; for in-

stance, how warmly he took poor Bateman's daughter by the hand!"

"Ahem!" nodded the loving wife; "Miss Bateman was a pretty girl, and, I believe, a very artful, forward one; *perhaps*, had I deemed it worth my while, I might have found all-sufficient cause for a legal divorce, had I pleased!"

Mariam's face lit up. She had no cause to like Kate; but the generous heart revolted against this onset against a poor absent girl's fame. The lips parted to speak; but a low, sneering laugh from Angelina made her feel how thrown away all fine sentiment would be amidst so much ungenerous judgment.

"Is it possible?" ejaculated Mrs. Adair, resting from her netting to devour a tale of scandal. "Ah! my dear friend, I can sympathize with you, for something of a similar case occurred to myself!"

Mrs. Bruce's face lit up with a cunning, gratified smile, as she peeped at the other under her brows; she saw the moment approaching in which Adair's memory would lick the dust.

"Indeed!" was all she uttered.

"Yes, indeed—and indeed!" and she "closed in," in military parlance, nearer her friend, for the fight. "But," she added, "I was firm, and soon gave the lady her dismissal; she was daughter, he *said*, of an old friend."

"The old tale!" tittered Mrs. Bruce. "I have heard twenty such from friends of mine; poor, injured creatures!"

"It was the first serious quarrel Adair and I ever had. This occurred about six months after our marriage; and I may truly aver that we never had a happy day afterwards—nothing but suspicious bickerings and quarrellings!"

We leave the reader to guess the surprise depicted on every face by this *naïve* confession after her previous conversation.

"It is not that men are brutally cruel," responded Mrs. Bruce; "they are far too cunning for that. They have a way of insinuating their tyrannous resolutions, so that a bystander would think them all kindness and affection."

"Exactly what Adair used to do!"

"Now, Bruce, if I wish to go out early, invariably says, 'I wish, my dear, you would defer it an hour later, I want to have a little quiet chat with you,' and that chat *always* terminates disagreeably; or, if *I* wish to stay at home, *he* begs me to accompany him somewhere, and, long before we arrive, *he* goes one way in high dudgeon, and *I* another!"

"I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Adair, "I do believe all men are made in the same mould! That was exactly like Adair—he was the most perverse creature, when he pleased, that ever existed!"

"Ah! well, my dear Mrs. Adair, you have your hour of consolation at last!—I mean," she hastily added, feeling the indelicacy of the broad rejoicing over the dead, "in the affection of your dear children."

No one replied, save a low ahem from Angelina, who was unusually silent.

"Certainly, all who marry have their bitter trials," sighed Mrs. Adair; "and the worst part is, no one pities or appreciates our sufferings. Now, every one thought me the happiest of women, Adair a model; and I am sure no woman ever had more to contend with from the often almost brutal temper of a husband!" Having delivered herself of this final opinion, she crossed her hands over her placid bosom, and looked a victim.

"Nay, I must lay full rightful claim to a wife's suffering!" exclaimed her dear friend. "For, assuredly, if your husband was brutal sometimes, I grieve to say mine is nothing short of his disposition now, and at all times; but, if it is a consolation, I am one amidst thousands as miserable!" There was a pause.

"And now, Mariam," said Mrs. Adair, turning towards her, and totally changing her tone, "I trust you will attend to those truly anxious for your welfare, and make the selection for your future happiness we are desirous of seeing you make. I mean——"

Before she could conclude the sentence, though little prone

to laughter, Mariam burst into the most joyous peal she had ever uttered—the childish voice rang in glee, and, strange sympathy, Angelina followed the example, though in a tone of mockery and derision.

"Upon my word, young ladies!" cried Mrs. Adair, colouring indignantly, "your hilarity, to say the least of it, is misplaced; if you cannot respect me, pray consider we are not alone!"

"Forgive me, dear madam," said Mariam, still almost bursting forth in the reprehended laughter; "but can you, in conscience, ask me to choose matrimony when all men are brutes and wretches? *If* I find one not such, I will marry—till then, if I forfeit all my dear father left me, I will remain Mariam Lincoln; and respecting the name the more, that I believe he was a good loving husband, as he proved a dear father to me!"

Our laughter and tears are extremes often touching. Mariam sobbed tearlessly and hysterically, as she recollected that dear and regretted parent.

"For my part, madam," said Angelina, in a severe tone, the most just she had ever used, "if I glory in being my father's child, I blush that you should have consented to become my parent in common with a man you so much despised!"

"This comes of my anxiety about that ungrateful girl," whimpered Mrs. Adair, whilst Mrs. Bruce sat silent and amazed, like some suddenly entrapped animal. "This comes of my anxiety that she should marry Sir Philip Montgomery; she never will have such another offer. He has——"

Before she could tell up his wealth, as she had been about doing, the door hastily opened, and Adair entered, his face beaming with a not-to-be-mistaken pleasure.

"Who do you think was married this morning at St. George's?" he asked, at the same time taking Mrs. Bruce's proffered hand, and uttering a *sotto voce* "How d'ye do?" whilst awaiting the result of the guessing.

A dozen wrong persons were suggested the happy couple.

"Sir Philip Montgomery and Miss—what Miss Lincoln's.

By Jove, a million could not rejoice me so much!" A cry from Mariam arrested his speech—he stood transfixed, gazing upon her, and a heavy shade passed over his fine joyous countenance.

When we call in the aid of art to assist or conceal nature, how, almost invariably, we destroy its purity! Cultivation may double the leaves of the violet, but it destroys the perfume. Go to the woods, and listen to the plaintive cry of the bird whose nest has been robbed, or the bleating of the mountain goat bereaved of her kid, and who for a moment will mistake either for a joyous tone?

Mariam endeavoured to subdue the wild happiness this communication of Adair's brought to her bosom, and not one in that room but imagined her convulsed with grief. She had started up erect, as by an effort of electricity, and now stood trembling with downcast eyes, feeling that all were regarding her, dreaming that all read her feelings as they truly existed, in their rejoicing that Sir Philip Montgomery's wife could now be nothing to Richard Adair.

Angelina's words awoke her to the reality of the general impression.

"You certainly have deserved this severe blow, Miss Lincoln," she sneered; "for though you have a fortune, Sir Philip was too rich to make yours an object to him; and, under *all* circumstances, I should imagine you scarcely expect to meet with another offer to equal this; most men *might* have prejudices in favour of English girls."

The look accompanying this conveyed the full meaning of her words to the poor susceptible Indian.

Mrs. Bruce and Mrs. Adair were loud in their exclamations against the depth of cunning Kate must have possessed to draw Sir Philip into the match; they were, neither of them, women to comprehend that, if Kate really loved him, a girl's pure warm affection might make an emperor proud to win her, and they had no right to suppose any but a good feeling in her *choice.*

Adair did not utter one word, Mariam's emotion had turned his joy to bitterness; he read her by the world's false light, and not that of nature's glorious sun of brightness and truth. She did not speak for some moments, and then any unprejudiced or unjealous mind would have correctly interpreted the subdued tone of a joy, fearful of expressing too vividly its overflowing happiness, as she said,—

"I am truly, sincerely glad, to hear of Miss Bateman's good fortune, though she is a personal stranger to me."

And, taking up her work, she resumed her seat, and the thick eyelashes concealed the hope sparkling beneath them.

CHAPTER XXV.

ADAIR spoke little more; there was a heavy weight at his heart—a last hope crushed into leaden dulness. He felt now convinced that Mariam had no affection for himself; he began to doubt her capability of loving any one, for, knowing she had refused Sir Philip, he could only suppose her a cold, heartless flirt. Angelina sat morose and more livid-coloured than usual. Any girl's marriage was painful to her; but how much more so must be the singular good fortune of one she had ever treated contemptously? Mrs. Bruce was all anxiety to know full particulars, and Mrs. Adair, pin-money. To few of their questions could or would Adair reply; merely saying he had seen the wedding equipages *en passant*, and inquiring, was told to whom they belonged. Mariam's fancied coldness made him turn to all thoughts and memories less than pleasant, and with bitterness of spirit he remembered Kate's cold contemptuous silence regarding his letter, and, the first inquiries answered, he quitted the room in a desolation of heart never felt before; he appeared to have lost two in one day whom he loved.

After his departure there arose a debate about the necessity of calling upon Lady Montgomery. Mariam felt her troubles not yet ended; she was not girl of the world enough to meet a man to-day with perfect indifference whom she had jilted yesterday; for, turn the facts as she would in her own mind, nothing but a cold and heartless act of deception towards Sir Philip could she make of it, in her self-accusation; and to make the matter more painful, by some means Mrs. Adair had become acquainted with the fact of her acceptance and rejection of him.

"I dare say, Mariam," said Mrs. Adair, "that you feel a certain soreness in meeting Sir Philip; but you have brought it all on yourself, by the, I am sorry to say it, overweening opinion you have of your own attractions. Men are *not* mice; and, depend upon it, secure as you may often think yourself in your power of recatching them at will, there will too frequently be a snug little corner, in which they will elude your vigilance."

"You indeed mistake me, madam," she answered in a subdued tone, "and I fear all efforts of mine will prove vain in ever teaching you to know me. I again assure you, I *never* should have married Sir Philip."

"Well, 'tis easy to say so now," sneered Angelina, and, since that is the case, perhaps you will permit my mother to call upon Lady Montgomery, as we are likely to meet her continually in our set." She continued, addressing her mother, "I do not see how you can well avoid it, though it may be somewhat degrading to visit a mere tutor's daughter—your once paid servant; but these low girls certainly have a talent for creeping in everywhere."

"Mrs. Bruce, you say nothing!" exclaimed Mrs. Adair, turning to the unusually silent lady.

"Ah! my dear friend," was the preface, with a lugubrious shake of the head, "you know not *half* my sorrows when I contemplate this sudden and extraordinary marriage. With my painful experience of matrimony, and deep study of all its phases, I can confidently assert my belief, that not one union *takes place* without entailing the misery of dozens. Directly

and indirectly, it draws all approaching it into its vortex of woes or annoyances; 'tis a bomb bursting among a crowd—dozens are wounded by it!" Having thus delivered her overcharged heart, she sighed deeply,

"What *can* possibly affect you, dear Mrs. Bruce, in this one?" inquired Mrs. Adair.

"Do you not see it all?" exclaimed the other, breaking into a whine, shrilly and keen. "It has been brought about by my wretch of a husband, and for some vile object of his own. Poor blind Sir Philip! poor unhappy me! would to Heaven *you* had married him, Miss Lincoln," and she turned towards Mariam; "we might all have been at peace then!"

"Pardon me, Mrs. Bruce," answered Mariam, smiling; "but I fear I should never have been able to turn aside, by any influence of mine, the dangers to so many of this bomb matrimonial."

Before any one else could speak, the door opened, and a servant ushered in Mr. Narcissus Browne.

"What is this I hear about matrimony?" he asked, having caught the last word, after first saluting the ladies, and quietly taking a proffered seat beside Angelina on the sofa. Three together were not too many to tell the wonderful news; Angelina, in his presence, spoke with a holy respect for marriage, totally at variance with her manner generally. Indeed her whole tone was changed, she was modelled on her name when Narcissus was by.

Mariam watched her opportunity to glide away, whereupon Angelina commenced, in a kind, plaintive tone, before Narcissus, pitying poor dear Mariam for what she must feel at Sir Philip's marriage, as she had been evidently attached to him, and, from a foolish love of showing her power, induced to trifle with him, and thus mar what might otherwise *perhaps* have been a match. The other ladies were indifferent about correcting the *perhaps*, by the assurance that only Mariam herself had avoided it; thus Narcissus was led to suppose her the jilted.

The two elder ladies soon made an excuse to creep into the

smaller room, and converse apart in melancholy forebodings over the event of the day; whilst Angelina undertook the most difficult task, of quietly bringing a man within the pale of matrimony who was obstinately resolved to remain without, nor, like a thoroughbred hunter, leap his five-barred gate to get in.

It is a dreadful case when men cannot be made to understand that you would like to marry them, and that they are expected to propose; it evinces a terrible darkness of intellect!

Not all Angelina could insinuate made the slightest impression; nothing could ever make her other in his eyes than a capital good fellow in a clerical sense, wanting only the impossible canonicals to be his helpmate in all things. However, *this* she made him understand, that *he* ought to marry; and as he had given, almost insensibly, the reins into her hands in all mundane matters concerning himself, from a real distaste to worldly troubles, he, with something of a sigh, replied that most probably she was quite right.

"But," he added, "I am forced to admit that marriage is often a rugged path, from which we are not in any way exempt, more than others; I never thought of venturing upon it in my own individual case; I had some unusual notion floating through my brain, that, as a clergyman, I might have made my home among my parishioners, without burthening my mind with the care of one of my own."

Here poor Narcissus sighed over the prospect before him, of loss of peace.

To comprehend all Angelina's ardent desire to urge him to her bent, our readers must be told that, some short time previously, she had received a letter from her once dear inseparable friend, Miss Caffir, who had departed for a visit to some country friends.

Miss Caffir was one of those very shrewd persons who sometimes outwit themselves. When Mariam arrived, it seemed prudent in her sight to creep into the good graces of the heiress, *even at the* expense of Angelina's favour; "but the poor simple

fool," as she termed Mariam, kindled in no wise at her advances, and she was losing ground in consequence of this double game with the other; so she wisely resolved to try the effect of absence.

Shortly after her departure, Angelina received a letter, containing the astounding intelligence that Miss Caffir had met with the poet's "honest gander" who had chosen this "grey goose;" in short, she was going to be married! Of all seemingly impossible things this was one. Now, though the man who would marry her could never expect to aspire to her friend, still even a proposal was more than Angelina had ever met with; no one had popped the question, even by look, to her, for assuredly, if they had, she would have accepted.

This marriage raised a storm; Kate's exalted it to a hurricane, and she was resolved, if it might be, to hunt the poor curate into wedlock; once decide him to the step, and what other could he think of but herself? Who may dive into the dreams of wayward fancy, even the more sedate ones of this placid son of the church? Angelina resumed,—

"My dear Mr. Browne, it may seem strange that I, a girl, should presume to offer you advice; but your kindness and—may I not say friendship?—embolden me to be more than at ease with you. I speak as—a sister," she added after a pause, as if seeking a word, and only making a shift with this *faute de mieux*.

Narcissus, however, noticed nothing; he was deep in his meditations. Shadow after shadow crossed his pensive brow, and then came a little gleam of light, and then something very like a ray of sunshine shot forth as he said,—

"Well, perhaps it would be better I should marry: it will give me a position I do not hold, and which, as a clergyman, I should possess; but then the question is——"

"About the lady?" she quickly inquired.

"Just so, where I might choose I might not be chosen; and I know my own disposition so well, I never could go wife-seeking."

"Have you thought of any one?" she anxiously inquired, peeping at him sideways.

"Not exactly, but—you have set me thinking, and you know how daring imagination is, unless we put a rein upon it; I might ask some one and be refused."

"Then you *have* some person in your thoughts? Ah! Mr. Browne, how shy you are!" and she playfully—an immense effort for her—touched his arm.

"You are a kind good creature, my dear Miss Adair," he said almost affectionately, for he really liked her; "and if any one could encourage a man in an uphill task, you would, for matrimony is such to me, never having dreamed of it, and feeling a confirmed bachelor in my habits."

"Marriage, my dear friend and brother, is a pure and holy tie, when two of well-assorted minds meet—two who have well known and respected each other before entering upon it. Oh!" and she strove to look wildly enthusiastic, "I can conceive no holier bond on earth!"

Narcissus looked at her, smiling in perfect innocence of heart.

"You do indeed encourage me, but yet it requires more reflection, for the sake of our mutual happiness; I mean," he said, stammering over the self-correction, "mine, and the lady's. Ah! that is the difficult path, the one I should choose—will she?"

He looked at her as if she knew on whom his thoughts were fixed, and certainly could decide the question.

"Try her," was the reply; "try her, nothing doubting, and you will succeed, rest assured; for she must appreciate your worth, or be a worthless girl—one little to regret."

"Then you have almost decided me, my dear Miss Adair, and to you I shall owe all my happiness, if I become an accepted suitor. Without these kind words from you, how should I have dared to hope?"

An importunate entrance from the two in the next room stopped all further conversation, and to Narcissus's previous *uncertainty* and timidity seemed to succeed a kind of excitement.

Before he left the house, he appeared like a man prepared to rush headlong into something not well known to himself—a quagmire, out of which he never might extricate his steps. In this mood he quitted the house, after first affectionately pressing Angelina's hand with a significance not to be mistaken, she imagined.

When a person has been hurried into a thought, perfectly new to their mind, full often it grows with amazing velocity into an ardent desire. 'Tis an arbour covered with sweet and odorous plants, in which we seat ourselves delighted, nor see any thing but fair and wreathing blossoms, and the verdure around and above us, sprung up in an hour by fairy wand, until some vile, hideous insect drops down upon us, to recall us to the reality of our position, and the impossibility of all perfection in this land of our exile.

Narcissus Browne quitted Eaton Square with a thoughtful air, and no wonder; he was composing a letter, a love-letter too, as he walked on. To doubt and gravity succeeded hope and day-dreaming certainties, castle-building, and the many pleasant things he would do for philanthropy's sake (for he was a very well-intentioned man) if his suit prospered; things, which now as a poor curate he could not accomplish. But there was a wretched "if" in the case; then how could he succeed?

His housekeeper was perfectly amazed at the unusual brightness on poor Narcissus's face, and still more when he sat down to write for a whole hour—he the most literal and least literary man in the world—forbidding any interruption till he rang his bell.

There we will leave him, and return to Eaton Square, two hours later, and look in upon Angelina, sitting in meditation, but not "fancy free," for a host of soft thoughts were playing round her heart, decked in Brussels lace and orange flowers.

Thus she reclined, her eyes half-closed, as the door opened, and Mariam with hasty step entered. The generally pale olive of her complexion was tinged with one deep crimson spot, as

she advanced, the eyes shot the fire of offended pride, and the pouting lip quivered with the heaving of the swelling heart.

"Miss Adair," she uttered, with vainly suppressed emotion, as she held towards the other an open letter, "when it shall please you for the future to amuse your leisure with practical jests, may I request that I may be exempt from bearing them!"

Angelina could not reply, her amazement deprived her of speech—*she* the authoress of practical jests!

"It may seem pleasant to you," continued Mariam, bitterly, "to expend your sarcasm upon me yourself; but permit me to say, that when the insults are continued from without this house, I, girl as I am, will appeal against it, where my voice may be heard, and justice succeed to tyranny. May I request you to be obliging enough to give this pleasant insolence to its writer, Mr. Narcissus Browne. If his sermons equal his uncanonical productions, I have indeed to reprehend my own want of talent and perspicacity which would prevent my appreciating them!"

She turned to quit the room, after laying an open letter on the table beside Angelina.

"Miss Lincoln," cried the other, surprised almost beyond power of utterance, "am I to understand that——"

"That," answered Mariam, turning round in now subdued anger, but with *hauteur*, "I positively decline the offer of consolation proposed for my acceptance by Mr. Narcissus Browne. Pray read this letter, if as yet unread." And she quitted the room, now pale as ashes, and, in closing the door, sobbed in that convulsed and overwhelming emotion which makes the heart grow so worn and old.

Her hand was on the lock, when another clasped, and drew it towards him; she started in terror, to find the possessor of it only Elton.

"What is all this?" he kindly said, still holding her a prisoner. "I see, by your quivering lips, that you are angry, and I heard your voice in tones unusual to you *of late*, since you have so resolutely undertaken that most difficult task—

self-subjection. Come, tell me what it is, here—down in the little breakfast-parlour—no one will interrupt us—I have much to say to you."

"I cannot now, Mr. Elton. Oh! pray let me return to my room, and be alone in peace awhile."

"Peace! Do you call it peace with that angry quivering of the lip? Come, come, I am an old man; don't fear me—let me advise—you need it."

"I know I do—I know I do!" she almost sobbed, as he led her downstairs; "but I have no one to direct or love me—not one!"

"Not one!" he replied, as he seated himself beside her, "and Mrs. Wilton?"

"Oh! she is indignant with me about Sir Philip, and—something else" (she did not say her fears about Adair). "We seldom meet."

"'Tis a pity; she is a good woman." This from him was immense praise—he had not too frequently honey on his lip. "A great pity," he continued; "for you need guidance;—you see I am no flatterer. What have you and Angelina been quarrelling about?"

"Do not say quarrelling!" she hastily cried. "I would not condescend to quarrel with any one."

"Indeed! then what are angry words? But let us not dispute about trifles; it was only your hot Indian blood in ebullition!"

"That's it!" she cried, in an agonized tone. "Always that reproach!—Indian blood, Indian temper, Indian tint. Oh, poor Indian, indeed!—rooted from her warm soil to perish on this cold dry earth!"

"Whew!" he whistled, looking steadily at her, and then he sat silent and thoughtful some moments, contemplating her. "So the wind sits in that quarter, does it? I am glad I have found out the cause of these tornadoes and hurricanes; they have puzzled me. Has Richard," he asked after another pause, "ever spoken to you of your Indian blood, Mariam?"

"You well know he has, Mr. Elton," and her lip trembled over the avowal. "And to you—to me—to all!—'tis a pleasant reproach, ever in his mouth."

"To me, you say!" he answered thoughtfully. "How do you know that!"

"I heard him."

"Then you listened? This was wrong, Mariam—unworthy of you—you paid the penalty, however; you remember the old adage."

"I did not mean to listen, as Heaven hears me!" she energetically cried; "but I could not pass the open door, and the words reached me."

"I remember. I am now dawning like a grey misty morning into daylight. You are my Aurora with your revelations—let us change this subject. What were you saying to Angelina?"

Mariam related the contents of Narcissus Browne's letter; and we, therefore, without indiscretion, may peep over Angelina's shoulder and read it aloud, as she indignantly did so to herself, bursting with envious hate. Thus it ran, or stumbled, for it was a very lame affair:—

"Dear Miss Lincoln,—After due consideration about many things, I have come to a determination, theologically and philanthropically speaking, of addressing myself to you. As regards the first motive, it is with this view: It having been pointed out to me, by my dear and much respected friend, Miss Adair, that, as a clergyman, I ought to marry, I have, I must confess, rather unwillingly determined upon changing my present state as soon as possible; and I certainly think, all things properly weighed, that a wife is almost a requisite appendage to a minister in his various duties, as comforter to the poor and sick, and a helpmate for himself, directing his steps by her good judgment, and in her leisure moments, like a second Dorcas, making clothing for the naked. Philanthropically *speaking now*: I have been more induced to turn my thoughts

towards you, to-day, than to another, because you are in trouble, and it is our duty to bear one another's burdens; and though your present one is of a nature to alarm some persons, I feel none such, resting perfectly convinced that, having passed months under the truly religious care and affectionate keeping of dear Miss Adair, you cannot but be possessed of those high principles which will at once make you struggle with and conquer your affection for a new-married man, Sir Philip Montgomery. With this perfect understanding of one another, I feel assured our union will be one of as much felicity as any reasonable persons could expect; and that, like Abraham and Sarah, we shall live together, if it please Heaven, to a good round age, and length of days. Awaiting your reply, believe me, dear Miss Lincoln, very truly yours,

"NARCISSUS BROWNE."

Angelina read this letter, and crushing it in her hand, went into a fit. Elton listened to every word, almost literally remembered by the indignant Mariam, who thought it a *mauvaise plaisanterie* to annoy her; and when she concluded with the "round age," and "length of days," he shrieked with laughter, which almost provoked Mariam to mirth, for indignation was thrown away on so strangely absurd a letter; yet Narcissus, all unused to love-letter writing, meant well and sincerely in all he said.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"WHY did you reject Sir Philip, Mariam?" asked Elton; "he was a good match, an agreeable young man."

"But I never could have loved him," was her interrupting reply; "and, unless I can love, I never will marry."

"But you know it is your father's express desire you should do so, and before your seventeenth year—time soon flies."

"Not with me—it has leaden wings."

"Then you are in affliction of spirit—poor child! Tell me, Mariam, for you are in outward seeming so cold and reserved a girl, why are you speaking so freely to me, almost a stranger, and one generally feared and shunned?"

"Because I like you, Mr. Elton," she replied, looking up with her deep, powerful eyes in his face. "I feared you at first; I like, and feel confidence in you now." There was all Mariam's candid, dauntless character in these few words, and their accompanying look.

"Well, that's something gained, something unusual," he said, smiling; "I generally am hated."

"By those who look to mere words. I did at first, and disliked you; now, I respect and prize your good opinion."

He was silent some moments.

"Let us talk of matrimony," he said, at length.

"Oh, why? I hate the subject; it has been held up to me as some bitter draught I must swallow."

"Well, so it is often," he sarcastically answered; "but take it disguised *en capsule*, and let that casing of gum be represented by—let us say respect, if not affection;" for an instant he paused, and looked furtively at her downcast face. "I mean," he added, "why not marry Richard? If you don't love him now, you would learn to do so, believe me. I know all his merits and demerits; he is a wild fellow, but the heart is *good*. You will tame him."

"I would sooner marry even Mr. Browne than Richard Adair!" she impetuously cried; "*he* would respect me, and I might learn to be satisfied with that."

"So would Richard, I will answer for it; for what he said about 'Indian blood' meant nothing."

"I could not marry him on these terms—I mean—I mean——"

"That his respect would not satisfy you: perhaps you have rightly judged. I have discovered what I wished to ascertain," he mentally said; "she loves him. I don't know what we are to do," he continued, addressing her, "for, marry they will make you. You are resolved against Narcissus Browne?"

"Would you advise that?" she deprecatingly asked.

"No, I cannot, even with all the advantages pointed out, of making flannel petticoats, and theologically loving him in all the roundness and length of patriarchal affection. Will you promise me one thing, Mariam?"

"Anything in my power, Mr. Elton; for you cheer my heart by kind words."

"That's a good girl; I see I shall make something of you at last. This then I will ask—when I propose a man for your acceptance, whom you may, in all confidence of affectionate gratitude, for the gift of your hand, honour with it, will you do so?"

"You ask much, Mr. Elton," she replied, in a trembling voice; "but I will, if my heart will let me—any one but Richard—but oh, not Richard!"

"I pledge you my word, I will not again urge for him; will that satisfy you?—Poor child!" he mentally said, "she thinks I do not read her. Her every thought is Richard, and her too susceptible nature would ruin her happiness, and his too, or I mistake much, were I not here to watch."

Before they parted, Elton had so completely convinced her that she was in error about any participation of Angelina's in mystifying her in Narcissus's case, that she could but look upon it as a complication of annoyances beyond her power to

control, and calculated to cause her hourly discomfort by contact with these hapless suitors; she felt only patience and forbearance might conquer; and, as a first step towards subduing her own too hasty temper, at Elton's gently pointing out, this obedient child of a really good-nature went to Angelina, and meekly, gently begged forgiveness for having suspected and accused her.

There she did little to please; her reception was ill calculated to convey a good lesson—taunts and insolence were her rewards; but Elton pressed her hand when she returned, and, poor lone girl, she felt she could love him dearly—as a father.

"She is a dear child," was his reflection, as he quitted the house, "and in good, loving hands will be a pearl of price; it is indeed to be hoped no meretricious setting may dim her splendour—not if *I* can avert it."

And now, like a phantasmagoria, the scene changes, and we are in a blaze of light, music, flowers, gauzes, hearts loving, and hearts aching, disappointments, and unexpected happiness—in short, we are at a fashionable ball, at Lady somebody's, it matters not, and here meet many who have not met for some time. Cards had duly been exchanged between the Montgomeries and Adairs, &c., &c.; and Bateman's fair child had a splendid mansion and a kind husband in Berkeley Square. This fair young bride was certainly the season's gem, set in costly fretwork, and worn by the many who jostled one another to possess her at their parties.

Fashion is a fickle, worthless jade. She seldom protects any for *mere* merit; there must be something more attractive. Poor Kate Bateman, struggling in the holy cause of a blind father's support, was left unsought for, by all who had known her, to starve or beg. Lady Montgomery, handsome, dashing, clever, was the beloved of many; and well did she fling back on the cold world her contempt for it, as she saw those who once looked superciliously at her through their *lorgnettes*, when she was taken on sufferance, a poor tutor's daughter, into *society*, now hurrying forward to obtain her notice. Every

wound her pride had received was remembered; every hand which had then been extended to her was clasped now in hers.

Kate had a fine nature; but unguided, untrained, there was the germ of ruin where only flowers should have been. She knew nothing of Sir Philip's attachment to Mariam, nothing of the motive which made her his; she was sufficiently well aware of her own attractions to suppose that love on his part had dictated the act which made him marry her, and, though her first thought in desiring to be Lady Montgomery had emanated from the wish to wring a pang from Adair's heart, the subsequent impulse was purer and better.

A month of kindness from Sir Philip on their wedding tour, which month *both* would willingly have abridged to return to town—but neither had courage to hint such a thing, so great cowards does conscience make us—had created a feeling of gratitude in her heart, almost amounting to affection, which was still farther increased on her return to Berkeley Square, to find her poor father, whom she had left in the care of nurses and attendants, comfortably installed, by Sir Philip's private instructions, to please and surprise her, in an apartment in their own house, a thing she had not ventured to hope. If Sir Philip did not love her deeply, it was that the canker rankled in his heart against Mariam, and, until that should be eradicated by the violence of a firm resolve, no kindlier feeling could find a place.

Thus, they were both pursuing demon phantoms, which might mar their whole happiness, and lead on to ruin.

Now we will enter the ball-room. Kate may certainly be pardoned if she felt a little vanity on advancing through the crowded rooms, at hearing at each step the words, "Beautiful Lady Montgomery!" or, "How lovely she looks!" and the dozen other flattering but truthful things, which are offered as incense to worldly charms, but which, most unfortunately, too frequently, instead of rising to the "altar of incense" for our good, like rain-driven smoke, drift downwards to a darker place, with the soul they have perverted.

Face after face passed her, scene followed scene, and yet her wandering eye failed to alight upon Adair, her sole engrossing thought; Sir Philip was lost too in searchings vain; and thus, by a strange perversity of fate, they had both been for a whole week since their return to town, for neither at home nor abroad had the four met, or any belonging to their set, sufficiently intimate to cast a light over the darkness of ignorance around them.

Fortune is a gregarious creature, rushing on in the midst of a crowd, never alone.

The first person Kate met was Mr. Bruce. The man's salutation proved his sincerity and freedom from all worldly consideration, in the pleasure the meeting afforded him.

"My dear Miss Bateman," were the words, and two hands grasped her one, warmly extended towards him; Kate and Sir Philip, on whom she was leaning, both laughed outright.

"What an old fool I am!" exclaimed the rough-spoken, generous-hearted man; "and here have I been hurrying into every ball-room this week, to meet and congratulate you, and now when I see you, I call you——"

"Never mind, dear Mr. Bruce," she replied smiling; "your cordial welcome is for little Kate Bateman, and the dearer for that I take it all to myself."

"And I sincerely congratulate you, Sir Philip," he added, "for you have made a good choice; good daughter, good wife, this is safe ground to build upon."

"I assure you I esteem myself a fortunate man, Mr. Bruce," the other replied, and, as he shook his hand, his eye looked kindly, almost lovingly, on his little wife; it wanted but the assurance of Mariam's perfect indifference towards him to change liking to love, anxious excitement to Heaven's best gift—peace.

Surely never were two persons so painfully cast together; Narcissus Browne might safely have preached a sermon thereon, and made his text, "Lightly and unadvisedly."

"*Have* you met the Adairs?" inquired Bruce.

"No, are they here?" and as she asked the question, by strangely distorted sympathy, both husband and wife coloured.

"Oh, yes!" was the reply; "I've just been chatting with Miss Lincoln, who looks careworn and sad—by Jove, I pity that girl! She really is a nice creature, and I fear not very happy, or well understood by those on whom she has been so strangely grafted."

"But Mrs. Adair seems a kind person," said Sir Philip, speaking anything, not to play silence.

"Very, indeed! but the kindest may not understand one another. I fear it is the case here. Miss Lincoln came to England, strange to many things about us all, stranger to every face. I think her a girl of very warm affections; I have seen her often lately, and her evident sadness induced me to watch her, and I tell you what, Lady Montgomery my dear, if ever a girl was in love and out of luck—that is to say, with some barrier between her and the object of it—Mariam Lincoln is that girl; and I am a plain man, and no sentimental fool."

"Surely with her advantages," Sir Philip said, "she need not love in vain?"

"Love cannot be purchased," involuntarily fell from Kate.

"But she is a handsome girl," urged her husband.

"So *I* say; but all don't agree. Now, my wife tells me—pshaw, though! why drag in my wife, who is always saying something, when I heard it myself. I heard some one joking young Adair about her, and he said he thought her almost plain—he hated dark beauties; that she might be one in an Indian tribe."

Poor, honest Mr. Bruce was proving the old adage, something about "dirt defiling us;" he had listened to so much scandal at home, that he was growing, at all events, used to it. He little dreamed the mischief he was doing by a few innocent *on-dits* and conjectures.

"Perhaps *she* is in love with Mr. Adair?" hazarded Kate.

"Oh, dear no—certainly not!" laughed Bruce. "I saw

them dancing together awhile ago, and no girl in love ever looked so——"

"My dear Kate," rung over the last word and destroyed it, and a warm grasp of the hand accompanied the salutation.

Does it not often occur to us on meeting a once—still prized friend, with whom we have had some slight coldness, to forget even the cause in the joy of meeting; and only afterwards say to ourselves, "Why, I should not have spoken?"

Adair forgot everything but his delight in seeing Kate; and so seemingly happy—she could not speak, her lips trembled so much. Adair saw this, and the veins in his forehead started with the suppressed emotion her visible suffering caused him; but with great presence of mind he added—

"Come, don't be angry at my calling you Kate. I know Sir Philip will pardon almost a brother, in forgetting a name as yet strange, though indeed welcome. From my heart I congratulate you both!"

His frankness at once removed any little flying suspicion which had been fluttering round the husband's mind; indeed he was too anxious to see Mariam, to heed Kate at that moment; and she, in this horrid game of cross purposes, felt angry with her own weakness for showing so much emotion, lest it might pain Sir Philip, whom she really esteemed; and for one who, she deemed, had so slighted her.

CHAPTER XXVII.

KATE is on Adair's arm, sauntering through the rooms, awaiting the next dance, whatever fate and the fiddlers may decide it to be; she has accepted him as her partner, much to Sir Philip's relief, who is off in search of Mariam. Kate has resolved—her first emotion over, which it had been impossible to suppress—to be dignified in her freedom, not cold; that would show too much feeling—but friendly, kindly, all a mere sister should be; what her heart felt, only she herself could know.

Whilst they were in the crowd, only a few commonplace observations passed between them; but crowds thin, and there is no place snugger or safer for quiet conversation than a ball-room, when people well know where to find the corners dedicated to mystery. One of these, Adair led Kate into, not from the slightest intention of uttering one word which Lady Montgomery ought not to listen to; whatever impulse or great temptation might lead him to commit, decidedly premeditation would have no hand in it.

Arrived in their corner, he looked around, none were within hearing.

"Katty, darling," he began, "let me, now that we are alone —for alone we seem here—from my soul wish you joy in your marriage with Sir Philip. You are a lucky girl, after all; for he is a nice fellow, and it will not be his fault, I am sure, if you are unhappy."

"I think you are right in your opinion of him, and those who judge dispassionately judge best."

There was a shade of sarcasm in her tone; however, he did not notice it.

"I take credit to myself," he continued gaily, "for not envying him; but, as it would be very wrong to do so, I check

the inclination. Moreover, there is no use expending sentiments which would only be cast to the winds; for you have not treated me quite kindly in the affair, and I ought to bear it in mind against you."

"As how, pray?" and her lip curled in scorn. She thought, even with her little experience of the world, that it was the hackneyed phraseology of the world of gallantry, which she had the good taste to detest.

"Why, Katty, after knowing one another so well and long, I think you might have told me yourself, and not have allowed me to listen with the crowd, to the tinkling of the wedding bells proclaiming the event."

"If you will tell me why I should imagine it could interest one so much, who knew my address weeks and weeks, without condescending to call, I will then find a fitting reply."

"Kate," his voice sank to a whisper, as he glanced round, "there are persons we avoid from dislike; others from too much liking. I leave you to choose the category in which I am to be placed."

"You insinuate the latter; I choose the former, as truthful," she bluntly replied.

"You are wrong, and you know it; but I suppose you were so much occupied with Sir Philip, that an old friend's anxiety about you reckoned no moment in your day's tax of duties to be fulfilled."

"You really pain me, Richard," she cried, impatiently shrugging her shoulders, and moving a step forward; "all this double-dealing insinuation is unworthy of your *once* candid nature, and of my ear as a wife!"

"As you will, Kate," he replied; "but there was a time you thought more highly of me than to suppose I could be base enough to endanger the happiness I rejoice in seeing you possessed of, by insinuation or word of mine; if I transgressed once, in weakness, I have grown strong since in my good resolutions, and if you *really* knew me, you would appreciate *my self*-denial in not seeking you at Brixton. I have more

than once ridden within view of the little cottage, and envied those who *dared* visit you; I durst not, for many reasons, and none offensive to you—quite the contrary. Come, let us join the dancers; I am *en train*," and with a forced smile he drew her arm under his own, and led her away.

She would have given much to take his hand in peace and renewed affection; but woman's strong unbending pride restrained her; she felt so deeply wounded by his silence as well as absence. Adair on his part said to himself, in bitterness, "All women are deceitful, all the world selfish. Well, so will I become, and thus compete with, and not be beaten. Lady Montgomery has effaced my little Kate."

And, with these errors to awake from, they moved listlessly and only in cold monosyllabic conversation through the dance, a prosaic quadrille. Meanwhile, Sir Philip rambled about until he could meet some one whose presence might herald news of Mariam. Who should this destined one be but Mrs. Bruce, and, tapping his arm as he was passing without noticing her, she motioned to a place beside herself, and commenced loudly congratulating him on his sweet wife, and, through him, the sweet wife on her good fortune in gaining the affections of one so charming as himself.

"Such a union must be happy," she whispered; "but be chary of your joy and felicity—too many envy it."

"Indeed! the husband only, of course, you mean?"

"No, not that either, though I make no doubt you have your enemies too; I allude to your charming wife."

"You flatter me too highly, my dear madam; who can be weak enough to envy her?"

"Do you know—but there, I have a great mind not to tell, but set you guessing; you will be in tortures of curiosity, and seeking magnetic communion with every lady you meet, to discover the suffering fair one—but no."

"Oh! pray, tell me," he cried, interrupting her.

"Let me complete my correction; the lady is *not* fair."

"A brunette! I rejoice; I adore dark women."

"Ah! this *badinage* is very good; but Lady Montgomery's fair hair and blue eyes tell tales against you."

"Never judge a man's taste by his wife; the diable, or Jove, prompts us into a living, witnessing fib against our real, professed taste. I really dislike fair women, in general. Tell me who the brunette is."

"Fancy, then," she lowered her voice. "I would not name it were you not a loving, happy husband, and long may you be so. Fancy I was at Mrs. Adair's the day your marriage took place; we were all sitting quietly at work or reading, when Mr. Adair burst into the room, with a delight, I confess I was not prepared for, to announce your marriage."

"In what could my marriage be unpleasing to Mr. Adair?" he suspiciously inquired—a thought of the *dénouement* of the tale not for an instant striking him, only an old, faint idea about Kate and Adair crossing his mind.

"Oh! you know persons always make impossible matches, when two are located beneath the same roof; and young Adair and Miss Bateman were by many supposed to be engaged, from the evident affection existing between them; but *I* always knew *that* never would be a match—Mrs. Adair was far too proud a woman."

"On my soul, Mrs. Bruce," he said, haughtily, "I think Lady Montgomery might be Mrs. Adair, and her husband and family proud of her."

"Good heavens, Sir Philip!" she cried, in seeming horror of herself. "What have I said? What a very stupid woman I am; fancy my forgetting that Miss Bateman had become your wife! Pray pardon me."

"I am too justly proud of my wife, Mrs. Bruce, to admit any feeling but mercy and charity in this our scarcely passed *lune de miel*. I forgive, but on condition that you continue the tale, so flattering to my vanity, though I cannot possibly guess the fair lady."

"Do I not tell you she is dark?"

"Well then, dark—O heavens!" and he laughed aloud. "I

see the jest now. I met a black girl one day at Mrs. Adair's, ugly as sin; dark as an African. Is she my capture?"

"The maid? Oh no! What say you to the mistress?"

"What do you mean, Mrs. Bruce?" he was pale, calm, and serious in an instant.

"Listen and judge; it is to me the most inexplicable case, showing how wayward some girls are. Mr. Adair rushed in, and set us guessing who was married—none could. When he named your name, Sir Philip, I never shall forget the wild agonizing cry which burst from Miss Lincoln. She sprang up almost shrieking, and then fell back, and of course there was a most painful scene of salts—sal volatile, *et cetera*."

She paused, but he did not utter one word. Some thoughts are born dumb, they utter no sound; but, oh! how they wring the heart which gives them birth—deep as a mother's sorrow, seeking speech in a speechless child.

Sir Philip did not know Mrs. Bruce even for her tale-bearing character, and much less her love of giving pain. She envied all, especially the young and fair, in their marriages, as she was resolved to be considered a victim in her own. Hate of poor Kate Bateman urged her to work on his vanity, lest he should love the girl too much—a little regret for another might admirably counteract this.

"I tell you this," she whispered, "now you are one of us married folks, that you may not encourage any weak, mawkish sentiment in a very wilful girl, I think by too much kindness or pity on your part—she really loves you; so now keep that secret in your heart, and check her, should she be unable to conceal it, for your poor wife's sake. I consider her just the kind of wild, ungovernable girl, who would die for love."

Sir Philip was perfectly silent; thought—heavy thought was plodding through his brain.

"For goodness' sake, who talks of dying for love?" asked Elton, who was roaming about the rooms in a desultory manner peculiarly his own, dropping into every coterie or *tête-à-tête*, in many instances a perfect marplot, yet on the whole he did

much good, interrupting many a tale of pleasant scandal, and this was the motive of this strange, but most philanthropic man. Convinced that Mrs. Bruce *could* say nothing beneficial to Sir Philip's ear, he dropped in upon them.

"Only a jest, my dear Mr. Elton," quickly replied Mrs. Bruce; "we were supposing a case."

"Pray, never suppose anything half so unsatisfactory as any girl dying for love," laughed Elton.

"Are you sceptical in such a possibility?" asked Mrs. Bruce. Sir Philip was perfectly silent and thoughtful, bad signs for his wife's happiness.

"Whether sceptical or not, is a matter of no moment," answered Elton; "the question is, the satisfaction attending such an event. Nothing could possibly ever be more devoid of interest, than committing an act of such egregious folly. There might be some satisfaction in creeping into a corner to die, like a wounded bird, if you were certain of being discovered, drawn to light, and having the posthumous triumph of a verdict—'Died for love!' But those matter-of-fact persons, coroners and juries, would be sure to sit upon the body (the very term is anti-poetic), quite unmindful of sympathy with the broken heart within, and, after a variety of ignoble questions, probably bring in a verdict of 'Died of indigestion, caused by Welsh rabbit, oysters, or some other light supper,' thus leaving a never-to-be-effaced stain on the memory."

"Ah! Mr. Elton," began Mrs. Bruce; then turning suddenly, exclaimed, "Where's Sir Philip?"

Sir Philip had caught sight of the long rich curls of raven hair, streaming over Mariam's olive shoulders, and without another possible act, even of common politeness, brushed through the crowd to rejoin her; *he forgot he was married in the joy of meeting her.* Oh! woe to the returning memory!

Elton saw him glide away; he was a man who seemed endowed with Argus faculties; he had succeeded in separating him and Mrs. Bruce, the rest he was indifferent about in his ignorance.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

When Adair and Kate had concluded their quadrille, he led her quietly towards a seat, deeply wounded by her manner. He imagined the Kate of his sincere regard merged into the mere heartless woman of fashion—too much elated by her present position to care for a memory or trace of the sweet homely affection which once drew them so powerfully towards one another. Viewing her in this light, a kind of contempt gathered round his heart for her, and in this mood he listlessly led her forward. Who may depict her feelings? She, far too indifferent to worldly state ever to have married Sir Philip, unless from some powerful motive, and this one strong enough to make her rush headlong into marriage with a man scarcely more than a cipher in her eyes. This motive, which had guided all her actions for weeks, ever since her union—this sole desire of meeting Adair again on his own ground, in his own circle, had in a few short minutes become a blank, a deception, and disappointment.

She had hoped, in her perversely biassed mind, to read regret, jealousy, revenge, every passion in his heart, on their meeting; and nothing was visible, even to her strained sight, but affectionate joy—the satisfaction of a brother; for his few words of seeming regret faded beneath the kindly sorrowing words succeeding them. Oh! there are moments when we give a loose to the wild frenzied passions of our hearts—that we indeed lose the Promethean fire from heaven, the chastening fire which purifies, and we sink down into the mere earthworm, generated in slime and mud.

Kate was in the almost frantic mood which makes a woman forget all; her hope, deferred so long, was ashes burnt to whitened dust on her lip, which every breath blew farther from her.

A few straggling observations fell from them as they crossed

the rooms. Adair felt so galled that he longed to rid his arm of her weight, and was anxiously seeking some one to lend their aid; and, despite all, she clung to that arm, feeling that, once relinquished, it might never be regained. She *saw* he was anxious to leave her, and her trembling eyelids could scarcely restrain the tears beneath them. The passage to a seat, where she would be left, was as one over burning brands; each succeeding step pained more than the preceding one. Her pride at last was quelled, and the lip parted to beg a respite, when some one held a hand towards her, and a friendly voice said—

"Kate, I am very happy in congratulating Lady Montgomery."

This was Mrs. Adair, who in her heart, so weak but so far from bad, was rejoiced at her good fortune—that is, she was delighted this evening, but to-morrow the weak mind would let all good evaporate, from its incapacity to retain it, and a milk-and-water indifference succeed.

"Come and sit by me, my child, and tell me all about yourself."

Lady Montgomery was for the moment Kate, Richard's playfellow.

"Angelina is somewhere here!" exclaimed Mrs. Adair, searching round; "let us go to her—she will be delighted to see you." Poor woman, she really thought so!

Kate looked up in Adair's face as his mother was seeking with her *lorgnon* for Angelina; that look was one of the olden happy time of confidence and affection. It said so beseechingly, "Stay by me in my annoyance," that he pressed her arm involuntarily, and led her to where his mother had detected her daughter.

Angelina shook her hand almost warmly; she had a motive in conciliating Kate. This was to pain and wound Mariam, if possible, whom she believed annoyed about Sir Philip's marriage.

Kate dropped into a seat, trembling lest Adair should leave them. Again their eyes met, their peace was half made—better have been left at the half way; it is a dangerous "whole" for

two who should not love. He smiled as he sat down beside her, and his mother separated her from Angelina; but this separation availed little—her voice could not be stilled. There was scarcely a word she uttered that had not some half-hidden meaning to pain. Adair saw this, and, with all the tact he was master of, endeavoured to avert the flying shafts; but one was reserved for her he could not foresee. This was the most unexpected vision, at a short distance, of Mariam leaning on Sir Philip's arm! Adair saw them first; his look of amazement directed Angelina's attention, who exclaimed, in well-feigned satisfaction,—

"Miss Lincoln and Sir Philip! I am truly happy to see that."

Kate stared at her. Adair knew his sister too well not to fear treason—he merely responded quietly.

"What is there so wonderful in it?"

He endeavoured to catch her eye, but she would not look—she was resolved to leave no excuse for them to blame her indiscretion, which should appear the effect of candour!

"Kate, did you like Florence?" he asked, to stop the other if possible.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Angelina, drowning all reply by her hilarity; "you have the most wretched memory, Richard—you must recollect a very good and substantial reason why I feel pleased and surprised at the very good understanding existing between Sir Philip and ——"

"Hush! Angelina," said her mother in an audible whisper, at the same time directing a glance at poor Kate. The mother was deceived. She really thought her child had forgotten Lady Montgomery's alliance with Sir Philip.

Adair saw all, and harshly and pointedly said, "Angelina, you might find some more amusing subjects for Lady Montgomery than mere foolish discussion, now forgotten, between her husband and your mother's ward. Mariam is a little too susceptible sometimes."

"I certainly *had* forgotten," answered his sister; "but

really we do not yet understand one another. I am dreadfully curious. Was the rejection on account of some susceptibility on Miss Lincoln's part?"

Kate had been looking from one to the other, puzzled, speechless, lost.

"Pray, enlighten me," she said at last; "I certainly have a right to know what interests Sir Philip."

"Let us speak in the past tense, Lady Montgomery, and hope other things for the present." Thus spake Angelina.

"By heavens, Angelina!" cried her brother indignantly, "you are mad—or, I will scarcely venture to insinuate, worse. Why speak of this? Don't mind anything, dear Katty," and he turned affectionately towards her. "You are a loved and happy wife now; so laugh the envy of the world to scorn!"

"Richard—tell me all!" whispered she with an excited, agonized countenance.

"If by 'envious' you allude to me, sir," said Angelina indignantly, "I cast back the name on those who may merit it. Lady Montgomery should be grateful for any chance which has made her the wife of so excellent a man as, I doubt not, Sir Philip is; at the same time, learn a Christian virtue, humility, by being perfectly well assured that she does not owe her present position to any overweening merit of her own. Pride is so great a vice, I——"

What the "I" would have been the preface to, is uncertain; for Adair sprung up, and, hastily drawing Kate's arm beneath his own, said:——

"When we need sermons we will enter a church; when we require a lesson of humility or Christian charity, it will not be to Miss Adair we shall come."

"For mercy's sake, Richard, tell me what it means!" cried Kate, clinging to his arm; she felt a presentiment of deep deception and annoyance.

"Only this," he replied, kindly; "you are not fool enough to suppose, in marrying Sir Philip, that he had never dreamed of another before you; the fact is, he had half proposed, some-

thing between jest and earnest, one evening at the opera, to Mariam Lincoln." He tried to soften facts.

"To *her!*" shuddered Kate—"to *her!*—ever, ever, Miss Lincoln!"

"Never mind it, dear Katty; you were not very sentimentally in love with the man, and now you are both happy. Never mind."

"But, Richard!" she cried, almost raising her voice in weeping, "I like him—almost loved him lately—he has been kind to me and my poor old father, and gratitude makes greater way sometimes in the heart than a girl's mad love. It is a stable thing to build upon—a rock, Richard."

And the envied, proud Lady Montgomery, let tear after tear fall unchecked on the flowers she held in her hand, and there they fell, gems of dew—such tears as angels weep in sorrow over a sister spirit, lost to their home!

Kate felt as if her soul of peaceful contentment was fled and lost. "He was a refuge to me, in the affection I bore him, from other thoughts; I tried so much not to think, but love him." All this she passionately uttered to his agitated—"Hush! hush!—dearest Kate."

And now—now only to have been chosen in *pique* to another!—a *pis aller*, a burden to him the day he becomes reconciled to *that other!*

"Have mercy on me, O my God!" whispered the trembling woman, bending over her flowers to conceal her anguish. "Have mercy!—for I did not marry him all for pride or vanity, but for my poor dear father's sake; and—and——"

The thought, too, of another reason, why she had married, rushed across her mind, and the crushed woman bowed her head lower, and acknowledged, "I am punished!—but have mercy, O my God!"

Adair had hurried her to the embrasure of a window, before her mastering agitation would have betrayed her to the crowd.

"Now I think of it," he said hastily; "you knew something of this before your marriage; I mentioned to you Sir Philip's

(I called it by a strong term) attachment to Mariam in the letter I wrote you, in my anxious fear lest you might be led into danger by his professions of love."

"What letter, Richard?" asked the bewildered woman, looking up in his face, bent so feelingly towards her.

"Katty, Katty," and he tried to force a smile from her by smiling, "*I* ought to feel wounded now by your indifference to my epistles, by your forgetfulness and careless reading, as I did at the time by your silence."

"Richard, what *do* you mean?" and she clasped his hand—"When did you write? Where? About what?"

A few brief words explained all.

"I never saw it, never received it, Richard; and, oh! far better not have known this *now*," was her trembling reply.

Here was the case wherein Colonel Maberly's ubiquity of vision was called into activity. A few days after this conversation, an affrighted slipshod servant admitted the fact of the burnt letter, when told that Government had taken it up.

And Adair rode thoughtfully, half regrettingly, homewards, when he reflected that, *perhaps*, but for this misadventure, Lady Montgomery might still be Kate Bateman, and he not so lonely at heart as he now felt. So much for the prudence of a brotherly explanation, in the embrasure of a window, in a ball-room.

But we will return there, though not to Kate yet.

Mariam's mind and heart were too good and pure, in the first place, to bear ill-will, or anything like a morose feeling; she could but feel kindly and gratefully towards Sir Philip, who had evinced so sincere a regard for herself. Only fools laugh at affection sincerely avowed; however humble, it is always a compliment. How much more, then, the regard of a man like Sir Philip? Now she felt convinced he had mistaken his own heart, or else been one of those men resolved upon committing matrimony, and perhaps, from caprice of the moment, had awarded her the first choice.

Under this impression, when he advanced towards her, veiled by Mrs. Bruce's representations from seeing clearly and truthfully, he read in her first awkwardness and heightened colour, a confirmation of the mendacious tale. In her subsequent gentleness and kindness of manner, both of which were *amendes* for her previous conduct, and grateful acknowledgment of his generosity, he read an irrepressible pleasure in his society even now; but, at the same time, he did her ample justice in feeling assured that her principles would ever war against her affection.

Neither had he any contemplated idea of wronging her; nothing beyond the pleasure of being in the society of one whom he tenderly loved still, and by whom he deemed himself to be deeply regretted. Mariam confirmed him in his error, by scarcely alluding to his marriage more than by a cold inquiry about Lady Montgomery, who was personally a stranger to her: the subject was naturally too painful a one to her, to be much touched upon. She felt, nevertheless, a pleasure in his society; for there was a gentlemanly gentleness and kindness of manner, which soon set her at ease; and with all the loneliness of heart Adair's estrangement caused her, the want of sympathy from any, even from Mrs. Wilton, who was ever censuring her rejection of this very man, it will not seem strange that she should gladly accept the generous forgiveness, as she fancied it, of Sir Philip, and thus conversing with freedom, and evidently mutual pleasure, they passed arm-in-arm close to the window where stood Kate and Adair.

The latter endeavoured to divert Kate's attention, but her quick eye detected them, and a scowl passed over her face, as quickly succeeded by a cold, contemptuous smile of bitterness, not unmingled with regret. The look echoed her last words to Adair.

"Better not have known this *now!*" for she personified the woman who had clung to the faithless weeds on a river's bank, which remained evidences in her hand, raised in despair, of the vain struggle she had made for salvation.

The lights are dying in their sockets, the chalked floors have no vestiges of wreaths of flowers and mythological figures; light feet have effaced them—light feet, and heavy hearts, perchance.

The rich mirrors give no more back the glowing look or radiant smile we awarded, by its reflecting influence, to the one beside us, we durst not look up to. All is still, save the step of a solitary domestic, who in drowsy mood extinguishes the fading lamps, treads on falling flowers, looks on the mirrors—poor slaves, obliged to yield to all, the base as well as the beautiful, and reflect back deformity as well as heaven's gorgeous moulding of loveliness. He passes on; all is darkness and solitude—emblems of the two hearts which entered those rooms in affection, to quit them in estrangement, suspicion, almost hatred—such was the fate of Sir Philip and Lady Montgomery.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SOME short time had elapsed since the ball in our last chapter, and events were crowding fast on one another. There are demons for the coarse, demons for the refined. Those grasp roughly in a hind's grasp, and hurry you forward over rocks and stones, where your hobnailed shoes will secure you from wound. These come in courtly garb, with frilled ruffles and pearl-emblazoned gloves, and gently touch your hand, to invite you to follow whither they lead. Such a one, invisible spirit, rode bodkin in the carriage homewards with Sir Philip and his wife; and gently pressing her hand as she stepped forth, in sympathizing fervour for all the wrongs she had sustained, he felt the pressure returned. It needed no more; so he held the *not unwilling* fingers in his own, and beside her entered her

husband's halls, and there took up his abode, feeling his services would be needed, and amply repaid.

It is morning, and in a quiet, half-darkened, but cheerful room, sits poor Bateman, in a capacious chair; all speaks of comfort and wealth around him. Looking in, one would fancy it a child's room, or, at best, a youth's study. The table is covered with puzzles, dissected maps, mathematical instruments, and curious toys; from the window are suspended various cages of foreign birds, *etagères* of flowers. In short, everything which could by possibility amuse a mind forced to seek employment in its most innocent capacities,—a mind sent back to begin its course again, like some child in a game of forfeits. Thus it was with Bateman at present; books were denied him, light too, except partially obscured; seldom permitted to quit this and the adjoining apartment, lest the promised sight should never quite be restored; and thus an affectionate, ever-watchful child had ransacked every bazaar, every possible repository, to find amusement for the not too patient sufferer.

On this morning, more restless than usual, he tossed thing after thing from before him; those which would once have amused his leisure, even in robust health, now were cast aside with an impatient gesture. A hand quietly turned the handle of the door, and a gentle step glided in; it was Kate—all Kate still to him. The tutor's daughter had nothing changed with state and wealth, simple in her dress as ever; perhaps the material may be more costly, but she is unchanged in the quiet good taste which characterized her. A plain pretty muslin wrapper flows around her, the *coiffure* alone is different; instead of the careless though becoming, and not untidy hair, irregularly arranged, as when she sat in the little rhubarb parlour the day Sir Philip first called at Brixton, a French maid has placed every particular hair in order, and a pretty simple cap half conceals its beauty, and certainly does not deteriorate from hers.

"Dearest father," she whispered, fondly kissing his cheeks

and forehead, both arms around his neck, "how are you to-day? Have you passed a tranquil night? Your eyes do not pain you, do they?"

"No, Kate—no!" was the querulous reply, as he almost struggled from her gentle embrace in nervous impatience. "But it would be far better, I am sure, if they pained me—there would be some chance of restoration; whereas, here I have been so many weeks now in almost darkness, and all improvement at a standstill! It will be dreadful to pass one's life in this partial blindness, with only these foolish things for society."

And he indignantly pushed away a host of her purchases of the previous day.

"Think, dear father," was the patient reply, "how many never see the light, and how many have been blessed with sight only to lose it: and oh! how doubly to be pitied such are. You were deprived of total sight awhile, to have it restored, that you might be taught the blessing it bestows; let us bless Heaven for so much loving you, to show you its power, and not use it arbitrarily."

Kate had never been instructed in anything religious; but there was the innate bias of a refined mind, making her naturally turn from many beautiful things, to do homage to the most beautiful.

"I *am* grateful, Kate," he hastily answered; but the tone was no proof of that feeling. "Only my restoration is very slow; how long have you been married?"

"Two months," was the brief answer, and a cold look of regret stole over her face, very unlike a joyous bride.

"Then you must remember it was a month before that the operation was performed, and then they told me I should have my sight directly."

"Three months is not so *very* long a time," said his child, still caressing him, and endeavouring to beguile him of a smile.

"Not *very* long," answered he in an irritated tone. "I dare *say it* does not appear so to you, gadding about to balls and

pleasures; but to me, poor blind old man, left alone in my darkness, don't you think it seems an age?" and he pushed her away. Kate stood half-hidden behind him, her hands pressing over her face to conceal the working sorrow traced there. Bateman saw nothing, heard nothing; and then, too, we grow so selfish in bodily suffering—in mental, we seek companionship and sympathy.

"I wish you would take those birds out of the room," continued the nervous man; "they weary me to death by their noise, and I *cannot see them.*"

Nothing can convey an adequate idea of the hopelessness his tone conveyed in pronouncing these words. Kate, already worn in spirit by her own troubles, sobbed as she proceeded to obey, and removed the little fluttering creatures the poor man had begged her to procure him some days before, that their song might break the monotony of his dulness. Her hands trembled violently as she raised them towards the cages, but she forebore one complaint.

"And all these puzzles, and children's toys," he continued, hastily brushing them from before him. "I am not childish yet, only a suffering old man and blind—quite blind!"

With the last words he commenced weeping like a child.

Poor Kate could bear it no longer; for there is perhaps nothing more painful to behold than tears gushing from the blind—eyes which cannot see, and yet have the power left of conveying a sense of sorrow.

She hastily replaced the unhooked cage, and, rushing towards him, dropped on her knees at his feet, and, clasping his hands, looked up with streaming eyes at his tearful, half-shaded ones.

"Don't, dear father—pray, don't;" she cried; "you will break my heart; you do not know all I may have to suffer. Oh, let me find peace with you!"

"Sir Philip is kind to you, is he not?" he asked.

"Yes; oh yes! but I mean your illness; I am not well myself —I am nervous, and——"

"You should check such feelings, Kate," he interrupted. "They are very foolish; and what can you have to make you sad or sorrowful? And, as to being ill, pray don't give way to that idea; what would become of me if you were ill?" and already, at the thought, he fidgeted nervously in his chair.

"I will not give way," she calmly answered. His selfishness dried up the torrent of her grief; she felt *he*, at all events, never could comprehend her.

"Let us speak composedly of your sight," she said, rising from her knees and sitting beside him. "You know, dear father, you have had the best advice, the first oculist in London, and all agree that only patience is necessary for your perfect restoration."

"That is just what I do not think. I believe Mr. Gray took less interest in me than he would have done in a rich or titled man. I think he——"

"For shame, father!" she cried, rising in irrepressible disgust; "say what you will of others, think what you please of me, much as it wounds and grieves me, but spare one who, when we were in poverty, acted so nobly towards us. I am certain that, like all generous hearts, he is more anxious about you, because no interest guides his attentions."

Kate's baby face was lit up with an expression little short of sublime, as she spoke in defence of one claiming all her respect.

"You yourself told me he was fee'd now," was the half-sullen reply.

"True; Sir Philip insisted upon it, and now Mr. Gray could not refuse without insulting him; but it was the first act in our poverty we should remember, and *I* shall never forget it. Come, dear father," she added, changing her tone to one of forced cheerfulness, "own you are a little cross to-day; and, like all invalids, the more so that returning strength enables you to exert your energy. Now, I am sure you see clearer *than* yesterday. Mr. Gray said every hour would show an *improvement*; now, tell me," and she moved to the other side

of the table placed between them, "how many fingers do I hold up?"

Bateman lifted up the head which had been sunken on his breast, and the hope guiding him, in spite of his moroseness, of proving himself better, he strained his vision to reckon the white fingers distended before him; after a few instants' survey, he counted exactly the five held up to view.

"And now," she exclaimed, moving a few steps farther off.

"Three," was the quick answer.

"And what colour is my dress, father?"

"Blue," he replied, after a longer pause.

"Ah! dear, dear father," and her arms were round his neck, "you see how very naughty you are? You are a spoilt child: for the other day you did not once correctly answer me, neither could you perceive a glaring pink dress, while to-day a pale blue is distinct to your improving vision."

A smile at last repaid all her patient care, the man was so well pleased to be convinced his sight was improving; and before she quitted him, which was not until the morning papers had been read to him, and many little offices of love performed, which a loving daughter so well knows how to make acceptable, he not only smiled peacefully upon her, but begged her to leave the little birds, they sang so sweetly, and the trifles on the table, too, they were very amusing, as he could not read, and thus he sank into a calm sleep, when, beckoning his attendant, an intelligent, well-educated young person, into the room from an adjoining one, Lady Montgomery glided noiselessly out, and, as the door closed, the comedy of playfulness was played, and the woman moved slowly and thoughtfully away.

Sir Philip sat in the study, attempting to fix his attention upon a book as his wife entered—a mutual feeling of want of ease passed over both when they found themselves in a *tête-à-tête*.

He, however, looked up from his book and smiled—one of those smiles (grimaces and hypocrisy to the soul) which cost

us so much in leaden weight from the violent effort to sustain them.

"Ah, 'tis you, Kate!" was his welcome. "I thought you were going to sit with your father."

"I have been sitting with him," was the cold reply. A short fortnight previously, "dear Philip," and a smile would have accompanied it.

"I hope you are not learning to neglect him by abridging your visits. Poor old man! never forget him amidst other newer pleasures, Kate."

"I trust no one will ever have to reproach me with such an act," she answered with some asperity; his tone displeased her.

"New scenes, new duties, or pleasures, often influence the best hearts, Kate, especially for awhile, and during that while the forgotten suffer."

"Truly, Sir Philip!" she laughed derisively, "you are in a moralizing mood to-day! Have you been making your morning study a sermon?—or, I ask—merely knowing the title of such a work—'The Whole Duty of Man,' for you seem in vigour on the topic?"

"Permit me to feel that you speak full lightly of duties; they are sacred things."

"If, Sir Philip, none forget theirs before I do mine to my father, I will first say, as the holiest and dearest, our consciences may be at rest. And a dutiful child, generally, is considered the best security for a wife's fulfilling hers."

"On my life! I do not recognize you of late, at home or abroad."

"As how at home?" she sarcastically inquired. "If you mean by my silence in your presence, I admit it; but it has been from courtesy, not to disturb your studies. You were perusing that book all the while we sat at breakfast to-day, and, assuredly, its pages must be of refined ore, requiring good weighing, not to lose their value; for, by my cursory glance, I perceive you are at the same page you had turned nearly two hours ago." Sir Philip reddened as he closed the book.

"And," she continued, "during that time, I have been endeavouring to comfort and amuse my poor father, whom I have left asleep—his best happiness—until it please Heaven to restore his sight."

She spoke with a degree of feeling that touched her husband.

"Pardon me, Kate, I am irritable this morning; but I returned late, and did not pass a very excellent night."

"Were you at your club?"

"No—that is—yes, at first—and there I met Adair; in fact, we dined together with those fellows I was engaged to, and afterwards we went to Eaton Square."

"We? What, all of you?" And the wife's pride rose at the thought of Mariam; but her gently-uttered sigh was for the other he had named—jealousy that others might see what she was not permitted to behold.

"Oh, no!" he carelessly answered, "only Adair and myself."

"I thought you told me you were engaged to accompany them to a box at the Haymarket?"

"So I had promised; but it was a dreadful bore, so I got out of it, and went home with him."

"Do you know, Sir Philip, 'tis a charming bud of promise to a young wife of only two months, your love of a quiet, domestic family circle: it promises, in truth, a *parterre* of roses for our future life!" her sarcastic tone pierced through all, despite herself. He looked scrutinizingly at her; but the quivering lip sought to control its curving in contempt, and the tell-tale eyes were fixed on a close survey of the Valenciennes of her handkerchief.

"It was a perfectly dull, domestic circle, as you suppose," was the answer.

"Who was there?" she asked, looking up.

"Oh, well! Mrs. and Miss Adair—and, by the way, *not* Narcissus Browne: he is never there now; what can be the reason?"

"Rejected suitors," she replied, no longer able to control some emotion, "seldom love basking in the eyes which have

disdained them, and the sweetest tones have a harsh sound when they have said 'No.'"

"What do you allude to? Surely Miss Adair has not refused him?—she seemed to me much attached to him." His eyes were fixed upon her.

"Possibly so; but—don't you remember an old couplet—

'Tom loves Mary passing well,
And Mary she loves Harry;
Harry he loves bonny Bell,
But finds his love miscarry.'

Miss Lincoln plays bonny Bell here, and Narcissus Browne, Harry."

"You surely do not mean that he had the presumption to address Miss Lincoln?" he hastily asked.

"*Presumption*, Sir Philip! and permit me to ask you—a man so scrupulous for duty and honour—since when was the affection of a minister of the church deemed an insult, and for a half-caste girl like Miss Lincoln! If he were, in your eyes, not unworthy Miss Adair, surely her mother's ward need not feel his offer an insult!" Her whole figure and features dilated with indignation.

"On my soul, Lady Montgomery, I am at a loss to understand your manner;" but, as he spoke, he felt her words, through rather too harshly uttered, were just.

"You perhaps alluded to disparity of fortune?" she said, "as gold seems the ruling planet now; yet how such a star can shine in Heaven, I know not, unless Satan grasped at one in falling, and, gilding it with his brazen touch, it has since been left wandering there to guide its votaries—wandering stars, to whom the blackness of darkness is reserved for ever! Wandering, indeed! wandering in search of peace and happiness, are *all* who choose mere wealth as a comforter;" she dropped her tone to one of deep melancholy.

"Lady Montgomery, your tone is flattering, it implies much," and he gazed coldly and scrutinizingly upon her.

"There may be holy thoughts, sanctifying influences, even in marrying for wealth," was her reply.

"Do you think so?—even, perhaps, as Eugene Aram committed murder, for the sake of prosecuting study."

The thought of her father, of why she had *chiefly* married Sir Philip, and the memory of her love for Adair, hopeless as it was, came sadly over her spirit, and calmed it to peace—the peace of a good action, although parent of despair in the first-named motive, and she said gently,—

"I know not, Philip, why we are so perverse to one another to-day; you came home late, slept ill, you say. I have been sitting with my dear father; his despondency affected me. Do not let us continue this tone. What made you stay so late?"

"We got card-playing at the club."

"I thought you were at Mrs. Adair's?"

"So I was, but it grew awfully dull, so I walked with Adair to Mrs. Wilton's, for Miss Lincoln, who had spent the day with her aunt; but somehow we missed her, she had returned in the carriage, so then we went to the club."

In speaking thus, he had not, let it be remembered, the slightest suspicion that his wife knew of his rejection by Mariam. She bit her lip to restrain a sarcastic reply.

"And when I returned," he continued, "your maid Justine told me you had retired, and begged not to be disturbed, so I forbore wishing you good-night, and remained in my apartment."

"Thank you—yes, my head ached fearfully."

There was a pause here, and Kate walked to a bookshelf to select a companion.

"By the way, Kate," he said, after a few moments' silence, "are you *particularly* attached to Justine, as an able *femme de chambre*?"

"Attached? yes, as one is to a person who knows how to arrange one's hair, and to a woman, *journalière* as I am in decent looks, to direct the days when pink, blue, or lilac may in safety be worn."

"That is exactly what I think she does *not* understand. Now your *coiffure*, for instance, it is far too stiff to my fancy; a more careless style would suit you, as it does all women better —ringlets, for example."

Kate felt her face flush; before her passed Mariam's rich, natural curls, which no art could constrain into tameness, but she answered mildly,—

"You once said—that was when we were in Paris—that Justine arranged my hair to perfection, and far more becomingly than in the more negligent style in which I used to wear it."

"Ah, *negligent!*" he answered, seeking an outlet to creep through; "you had, I remember, a foolish habit, adopted by some artists and authors, of being negligent almost to excessive untidiness of dress. Some persons fancy, that to seem full of thought and genius, they should appear like an old mouldy office, in inns of court, the occupants of which have not time even to sweep the cobwebs out of their eyes."

"Thank you," she said, forcing a smile to cover a presentiment of annoyance; "I managed, however, to clear my vision of these same cobwebs when I met you."

"Is that intended for a compliment? I will accept it as such if you saw me clearly; I hope you read me as I deserve, that is, as regards yourself, in all kindness."

"And love?" she hastily and laughingly interrupted; but the laugh was inharmonious, and the face accompanying it out of tune from its sad expression. It is not distension of mouth which creates a smile; it is the pleasant music, æol-like, playing over the countenance with every passing breath,

"You cannot doubt that—but to return to Justine's taste and talent. You know, Kate, most young ladies entering life require a mistress' hand to direct even the purest taste. Now your dress to day. I never particularly liked blue, and to you it is singularly unbecoming."

"Really!" and she moved towards a bookcase with mirrored *doors*, and surveyed herself; and, as she did so, it recurred to

her, that only the day before, Adair had told her how very becoming this same dress was, having called early to see her.

"Blue," she continued, "is the *éclat* of a blonde, as yellow, *le fard des brunes*."

"That's the very colour I like, and I am sure it would become you better than that disagreeable one, to my taste. I saw the prettiest dress a day or two ago, I think, I ever saw; it was so simply made, too—pale yellow muslin, more of a buff colour, a *visite*, I think you call it, of the same, and a white crape bonnet—it was the perfection of good taste; I thought so, and, you see, curiously inquired all about it of the fair wearer."

"Fair? or only so in honour of her sex?"

"As the latter, I suppose we must say, though a beauty *sans contredire*—I mean Miss Lincoln."

Lady Montgomery drew herself up to the fullest height of her muscular capacity; and the empress of the world, were there such, could not have looked more sovereign contempt as she turned towards him from the mirror.

"What may become Miss Lincoln, would *not* suit me; neither do our tastes in any way agree. She is more exacting, more difficult to please; I more humble in my wishes, though perhaps, I will admit this, less wise, more devoid of taste; and what she despised and rejected, I, Sir Philip Montgomery, accepted."

And leaving the amazed man overwhelmed by her uncontrollable burst of indignation, and speechless from surprised annoyance at her knowledge of his defeat with Mariam, she majestically quitted the room, for even the girl in appearance learns dignity in insult.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHAT is the world but one huge quicksand? We walk on, every moment expecting to sink in some yawning grave at our feet. We dread fixing our affections on anything around us, lest it should in an instant sink for ever from our view. Yet on we must walk—all surface, knowing that beneath that surface the loving face is hollow and hideous, the hand we have clasped, fleshless bones; all, all deceit, and we quite as deceitful to ourselves, for we forget our own bulky weight of errors, sinking us at every step into the gulf before us. All is deceit!

And thus, some two months after the events of the past chapter, Sir Philip and Lady Montgomery, in seeming affection and unity of heart, stepped into their reserved carriage on the rail, going to pass the autumn's first month at the Grange.

The affections which might have turned to him in all sincerity—which *were* turning—by a little judicious kindness, had first (by the knowledge most galling to any woman, that she has been chosen in *pique*) grown stern towards him, and secondly, by his ill-advised, but uncontrollable impulse, in always introducing Mariam as an example to her, become perfectly estranged from him. *No* heart can exist without some passion; it may be one to elevate the soul, but *passion* it must be, or it will die of inanition, and the mind sink into idiotcy. The one which Kate would have exerted all her efforts to subdue, out of gratitude to her husband, while she deemed him worthy of that feeling on her part, now was indulged in without restraint, whatever better reaction might hereafter take place; for, so far from feeling grateful to Sir Philip, she almost hated him for having probably come between her and *Adair*; for assuredly, as he had written once, he would have

done so again, and who could now calculate what the result of the meeting might have been?

Thus on life's quicksand journeyed down the Montgomerys. Her father was so much recovered that now he could dispense with the exclusive care of his child for amusement; he was permitted to read, and consequently Kate, without a self-reproach, departed for the Grange, prepared joyfully to encounter all the annoyances she foresaw there, for the reward of Adair's society, whatever danger might ensue from meeting, unprotected by any sterling virtue at heart, the man she loved so madly.

Surely it will never be reckoned to us as a mortal sin, those errors committed, however grievous they may be, when the sinner has been cast adrift on rough waters. Beauty for a figure-head, talents, genius, all which may charm the eye or fancy, as pennants floating gaily aloft before the breeze, to draw all eyes to the barque balancing herself in the sunny daylight; and beyond all these, that generosity which leads many more into error than mere passion, from the fear of inflicting pain upon another by a stern and cold refusal—surely it will be reckoned to such, that Heaven made them worthy its creating hand, and then, by some fatality, threw them on the worldly care of those who omitted casting a mantle over all against harm or crime—the mantle of religion!

Thus it was with Kate;—handsome, talented, a heart of feeling and generous warmth, but utterly devoid of all knowledge of right, beyond the worldly laws of not inflicting *open* scandal on your neighbour. This is to deny the existence of a supreme and just Being, who sees all, and will weigh, in a balance, the good and evil.

Sir Philip had asked no question of his wife as to the means by which she had obtained her information about himself and Mariam. The momentary annoyance passed, and the wound his vanity had received, burned by a little mental caustic—indifference—which seamed but did not heal the wound—he thought it better not to ask any questions, but let the matter

return to its normal state of quietude, by silence; but this was as gross an error as he could have been guilty of. A little generous explanation might have produced pardon and affection, at all events, respect, on her part, and in respecting him, she would have learned self-respect for his sake; but the thing, passed over in silence, left two impressions on her mind, neither conducive to love—contempt for the mind, too little as she deemed it to court and face explanation, and hatred of the man who seemed by his silence to despise her wounded pride.

As to him, he never could forgive her proudly acknowledged disdain, and still less the implied contempt of Mariam for himself, true or false; the latter he believed, still Kate thought otherwise, and he hated her for it.

Readers—forgive us if we seem too prosy; but if you are not wedded, you may be, and why should the pen placed in our hands by fortune, *not* be better employed, as far as our limited powers enable us to employ it, than in a mere novel? We all talk of ameliorating the human race, abolishing slavery, and various very excellent things, as merchants term it, for export use; but let us first look around us and see the misery of thousands at home, and, while we read glowing pictures of the sacredness of love in the married state between *actual* slaves, cry in anguish, "Far better any slavery of body with this unity of affection, than that of two beings hating one another, and compelled to wear those chains of the mind and soul for life!" Let us seriously see if the evil may not be ameliorated, and thousands set free from sorrow, who have entered the married state full of hope and love, and who are fain to acknowledge, after perhaps a very short experience, that if in life's cup there is *sure* to be a grain of sand at the bottom, in the wedded chalice, wherefrom two loving lips should sip together, there is, too often, a deep sediment of mud!

Let us leave slavery abroad for the generous hearts there to abolish and destroy it, as everything rotten and corrupted *must*, sooner or later, crumble to dust by its own rottenness, and let *us first*, at home, correct and abolish the slavery of our own

passions; and while we see the mote in another's eye, *feel* we have one in our own, and so kindly take, if we give pain, to the one we have made *one* with us. Let candour step in, and NEVER pass a sorrow or grievance over unshared or unexplained; and thus the very harshest will feel the truth of the divine unity, sent down dove-like on every married couple; but, if we perversely clip the poor dove's wings, oh, then it must grovel in the mud and earth, and farewell to all *confidence*, the true secret of married love! Married life is like Pandora's box, with this difference: there is "confidence" at the bottom; shake up all the plagues together, find *this*, and double-handed defy them; and the day this is truly discovered, feast and cherish it, and cast the whole box into the fire as *feu-de-joie*—all its torments will burn like dry twigs.

Depend upon it, *un*gentle reader, the wife who, while she tells you your faults candidly, and in a sweet quiet tone acknowledges her own, makes herself so great a part of yourself, that you *cannot* cast her from your bosom.

We have finished our homily, so we'll go into the dining-room at the Grange, and sit down beside Kate and Adair, who entered it arm-in-arm.

We fear it will be a very dull dinner, there are so many wet blankets thrown over the various chairs.

First, Sir Philip is dreadfully disconcerted at being obliged, despite much manœuvring against it on his part, to hand down Mrs. Adair, who is in a sentimental mood, having just heard that Lord Billow has been accepted by another; consequently, she has thrown herself back on poor dead Lincoln, this being the anniversary of something or other connected with their acquaintance. There is nothing better through life for a woman of the world, than to have a publicly acknowledged cause of grief; for on it, or some memory connected with it, she casts all her ill humour, or lowness of spirits. Mariam's wardship made her father's attachment to Mrs. Adair a known fact, which there was no indelicacy in her alluding to.

Now there is scarcely a more disagreeable thing, if you are

sentimentally sad yourself, than to dine next a person suffering from the same malady; the two have no sort of sympathy for one another—for whilst one is talking of his or hers, the other is dying to give utterance to hers or his; or if, as in Sir Philip's case, they dare not speak it, they long to strangle the person whose chattering prevents their even thinking of their selfish sorrows. Thus, Sir Philip had to submit to the victimization of Mrs. Adair, who, sighing, began with (after looking at Mariam),—

"I cannot bear to look at that girl, she grows every day more like her poor father; and though I did not love, and in short refused him, still his premature death will be a living reproach to me all my existence. I wish to Heaven she would marry! Now, there is—" and forthwith she entered into a list of those who offered, those who would be eligible, and those she *thought* Mariam not disinclined to accept.

Our readers may guess how pleasing all this, the first and last, must have been to him.

Mariam was seated next Narcissus Browne on the one hand, and Elton on the other; the former, with dogged stupidity, was bent upon *explaining* his letter, as if it needed such! and Elton, overhearing all, cast occasional shells in from the battery of his wit, which, like cross readings, made the strangest mistakes. Around the table were many strangers, many we may never even speak of—the side-dishes of life. Angelina had yet a clinging hope about Narcissus; she was not at heart too proud to turn comforter, could he be brought to propose, and, in this anticipation, he had been invited to the Grange.

Angelina's wet blanket was in watching them, and her revenge in disturbing the most harmonious couple at table—her brother and Lady Montgomery.

Adair, in paying almost exclusive attention to Kate, must be exonerated from the shadow of an evil intention; he was sincerely attached to her, and the passion of one day had subsided, since her marriage, into a strong regard, tempered with the confidential love, of a brother.

What a pity it is, too often, that people start down a long road together with these good thoughts, and at some very narrow crooked turning stands, barring all passage, a gnome with sinister aspect, who cries out, "She is *not* your sister; you have been journeying on a false track."

So nothing remains but to turn back, and recommence, only to discover at last, alas! that the first course was the safer and better one.

"Montgomery looks cross, Kate," whispered Adair; "have you been scolding him on your journey?"

"I never scold—seldom interfere with him; he does as best suits his humour."

"I think you are wrong; you should learn to be out of temper sometimes; making up is——"

"A glass of wine, Mr. Adair?" asked Narcissus across the table, who had never, despite all intimacy, got beyond "the mister."

"Not exactly," whispered Adair to Kate, following Narcissus' interruption of his phrase. "With pleasure," he replied, bowing to the patient one, who sat staring at him glass in hand. "What an obsolete fellow he is!" continued Adair to Kate; "he does nothing else but remind us of our grandfathers' pleasure of a glass of wine."

"Any thing but that," answered she; "it is the bore of old-fashioned dinners, and the most perfect 'hope I don't intrude,' ever invented."

"An abortion, *de trop* and *mal à propos*. But we were talking of making friends."

"Don't speak of *that*," she hurriedly answered.

Adair looked fixedly at her; forgetting all the past, her downcast eyes recalled him to memory, and, glancing up, their eyes met. Nothing more was needed; the look spoke all, and Adair grew thoughtful. He was on ground he had promised himself to avoid; yet such a wilful thing is memory, his, from one little phrase uttered, gave back all the scene between himself and Kate which had better never have been remembered.

Resolved if possible to recall her thoughts to her husband, and imagining a slight matrimonial difference of opinion had alone produced her observation in the first instance, he said,—

"Come, Kate, I will not have you give way to your little warm temper, because Sir Philip has possibly been lecturing in all kindness; tell me what has occurred?"

"Better you should not know, Richard," was her answer.

"Why better? in what can it affect me, except in the annoyance it may cause you?"

"Just so, and for sympathy's sake you might feel more keenly than in prudence you ought, or I, as one much loving you, desire you should."

"What an enigma you are! Don't you know 'tis always safer to tell than set a body guessing: imagination is a beautiful or terrible gift as we use it."

"So is summer rain: it brings forth flowers, or inundates and destroys."

"Is your father perfectly recovered, Lady Montgomery?" asked Angelina across the table.

"I am happy to say, almost as well as ever," was the smiling reply.

"Montgomery, are you going to Doncaster?" asked Adair, raising his voice, dreading some annoying question to follow on the heels of Angelina's commencement.

"I think so, that is, if——"

Here he entered into a string of racehorses, and their chances, little interesting to our readers. Under the cover of this battery of "sweepstakes," "hedges," &c., Angelina continued,—

"It must afford you infinite satisfaction, Lady Montgomery" (she seemed over-anxious, in repeating the name, to remind all present of the elevation bestowed upon Kate, as her subsequent observation proved), "for it was a fearful visitation, entailing so many troubles upon you both. I assure you, you had our sincerest sympathy."

"We cannot be sufficiently grateful," was the hesitating reply.

Kate knew an enemy was in ambush, and not seeing him, she was obliged to be on her guard against surprise. Poor Adair was confused almost beyond coherent answers to Sir Philip, who was infinitely relieved by the horseracing, which carried him away from the sentimentality of a matron's peep into girlhood, where the widow's cap nods in funereal melancholy over the golden ringlets of sixteen.

Sir Philip heard nothing of the conversation between his wife and Miss Adair; he was consequently much at a loss to comprehend his colloquist's confused answers. Poor Richard! he had one ear full of horses, the other Angelina's jarring tones.

"Poor Mr. Bateman," she continued, "how delightful it must be to him to recommence his daily occupations. Has he many pupils now?"

Now Kate saw her way, and, we grieve to record it, a spirit of revenge against her husband, which could not but rebound against herself, made her enter with spirit and rejoicing into that which was intended to wound her.

"Not as yet," she answered; "his sight continues too weak to be much tried."

"'Tis, indeed, a pity," responded Angelina. "My dear Miss Bateman, you must feel this disaster deeply."

Kate laughed a soft unmistakably joyous laugh, which was even read thus by the amazed and disappointed Angelina, who had a peculiar talent for *forgetting*, when it suited her purpose to do so; absence of mind is a great gift sometimes—that is, the semblance of it, and she was one of those who, with immense pretensions to lady-like manners and good breeding, overlooked the admitted fact, that almost any rudeness may be pardoned, except that at your own table, where your opponent is forced to accept anything your wit (?) or temper may impose, by way of indigestible *entremet*.

A well-played movement of surprise, coupled with an "Oh! I beg ten thousand pardons, Lady Montgomery! but you too well know my absence of mind to heed anything I utter. Of

course, now, your father has relinquished teaching; tutorship is at all times disagreeable, doubly so when failing health and necessity make it a cruel tax on our patience."

"I, inexperienced as I am," uttered a voice almost tremulous from emotion, "must beg to disagree with Miss Adair. I can imagine it a most pleasing task to instruct the ignorant desirous of acquiring knowledge, or to cultivate the minds overgrown with weeds, which strew abroad the seeds of impertinence, jealousy, and ill-breeding."

To the amazement of more than one, the speaker was Mariam, whose dark flashing eyes lit up the whole countenance with supreme unrepressed contempt.

The guests were not so numerous but that all, more or less, understood the passing scene, coming so immediately under their observation.

"Worthy of you!" whispered Elton, in a voice of triumph; for none so well read the natural antipathy between Lady Montgomery and Mariam.

Angelina was speechless; her evil had recoiled on herself. For a moment Kate was too much agitated to reply. Generous and noble-hearted herself, she felt all the other's generosity, where her conscience accused her of more than once lately treating her with coldness and undisguised dislike.

The words uttered, Mariam grew calm and listless as usual, all power of energetic exertion seemed for ever departed; for, take hope from us, what are we?

Kate, roused at last, flushed with surprised gratitude; her eyes lit on Mariam's, theirs crossed in a glance, where soul bows to soul, and then the cold blighting wind of the lower earth came over both, and while one regretted her involuntary indignation at the insult to an unoffending woman, the other grieved to feel herself under an obligation to a rival—twice one, as she dreaded.

What we relate was the act of an instant. Adair, speechless with suppressed rage, which he could not give vent to, stopped suddenly in the middle of a speech, making the whole

affair more obvious, and Sir Philip, who had heard nothing, asked, "What is the matter?"

"Simply," Kate hastily answered, recovering herself, by the evil promptings which made her pain and abase her husband's pride, "that Miss Adair, in all kind anxiety, is desirous of knowing whether my father is sufficiently restored to resume his teaching, and then apologises for supposing that *now* he should exercise his talents as tutor; to which I reply, that Mr. Bateman has too much proper pride to owe his subsistence even to his daughter's husband while Heaven gives him power to eat his honestly earned bread in peace and independence."

The first prompting feeling in commencing gave way to a quiet dignity, before which even her galled husband bowed in respect.

Angelina's speech brought annoyance upon herself in more ways than she had imagined it could. Narcissus, on whom her purposes matrimonial were still bent, heard all, and, leaning across the table, said, pleasantly smiling,—

"Ah, my dear Miss Adair! I fear from your speech that poor tutors do not rank highly in your estimation. I am sorry for it; for how many of us ill-salaried curates are obliged, with large families perchance, to eke out existence by becoming tutors?"

"But such is not your case, Mr. Browne," laughed Lady Montgomery; "speak not of yourself as a family man before the breaking hearts, perhaps even here, sighing to win your affections. I am right in so saying—am I not, Miss Adair? And pray, dear madam," she continued, still addressing that lady, "dispel by your usual gaiety and urbanity the passing cloud cast over your mother's guests, or else they may fancy themselves surrounded by needy tutors, their wives and daughters."

The repartees were becoming far to *piquantes* too be in perfect good breeding. Mrs. Adair was not a person to draw any out of the quagmire of an unpleasant discussion, by ease of manner or a quiet changing of the conversation. Elton, however, did it as it best might be done, in seriously asking a question, so

perfectly irrelevant and stupid, that, coupled with the expression of his face, the table, friends and foes, uni hearty laugh, the intention was so obvious.

"Angelina," he said, reaching forward, "is it a fact, Sunday-schools, that every child has to bring its ov with its name on it? and have you ever known a cas an infant was iniquitous enough to purloin its com crockery?"

The laugh subsided, and with it the others felt humbled in their own littleness, which had made the to pointed rudeness at a guest's and host's table. The t turned, and with it came in smoother waters in appeara those whose depth might overwhelm more than on trusting to their surface of glass.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A DAY or two placed things on a standing at the perfectly comprehensible to all there; it was the geog puzzle of the first day put together, every piece fitting— continents, oceans, all were in order on the table.

Adair had made a vain attempt to attach himself to by thanking and justly praising her defence of Kate; was the worst start he could have made to win in the it implied far too much interest in Lady Montgomery annoyances. So Mariam *chassé'd* him by her cold man took up her defensive position against any further between what she deemed two safe men, Sir Philip and as esquires. Kate unhesitatingly placed herself under wing as her *cavalière servante*, casting few thoughts Philip, beyond a greater estrangement every day fro

coupled with bitter contempt for Mariam, whom she regarded as a heartless unprincipled flirt.

As to the others, they did as they pleased; there were beaux and belles, flirting, loving, jilting, and showing off, in tight-fitting jackets and shortened petticoats, in archery meetings on the lawn; and one of these we will attend. Kate was there of course, and well she looked in her green dress and archer's cap, from beneath which her golden hair glittered in the autumnal sun. She had dropped aside, having passed her turn, and beside her stood the one who seldom left her—Adair.

There were many adverse things urging him on towards danger and ruin for both, and without any inclination on his part to lead Kate astray; his feelings were those of an attached brother, but such are very dangerous where no actual tie of blood unites two who well might love. Kate thought of nothing but the pleasure of being in his society; the rest was indifferent to her. Of actual *guilt* she did not dream, which made her case the more dangerous; for the heart will often dwell on harm, until it becomes so familiarized with the idea, that as much disgust ensues as if the deed had been committed, and abandonment, change, shame, all combined to make the soul shrink from the degraded mortality.

The first view of a guilty passion brings so much allurement with it, that the unreflecting heart grasps at the shadow of delight, which, like those figures playing on a wall, thrown there by the flickering blaze of a fire, seem other than what they really are, till reason seeks for cause, and we discover our deception fatally, and too late; for shadows pass, but the scorching flame of guilty love leaves a scar for ever on the heart. Two more in danger than Adair and Kate were never thrown together; for both had wrongs and slights to avenge against those to whom their mutual love would bring shame and sorrow, but neither thought of more than the present pleasure of each other's society.

And, while the ringing laugh ran through the gay company on the lawn, where was Mariam? Poor susceptible Mariam,

driven by her own diffidence, and want of confidence in her own powers of affording pleasure to any, into utter loneliness!

She stood at her bed-room window, facing the lawn; her face, concealed by the curtains, was pressed against the glass, and the sad eyes followed every movement of Kate and Adair, as the former bounded across the green, like a fire-fly in the sun, all joyousness and beauty.

Mariam watched and watched, and poor Leah, who had of late been so little sought by her mistress, from the dread her words had inspired her with, stood breathless behind the bed, watching too. Mariam's suppressed emotions of late had puzzled the girl, and she doubted whether her mistress loved or hated Adair; to her own wild uncontrollable passions, this subdued suffering, for she saw she suffered, was a perplexing riddle.

"Me must know," she whispered to herself, "Leah must know, and den him act, when him see de way clear, but clear, berry clear. Missy no speak never now."

"Oh! would that I were fair like her!" burst at length from the aching heart; "for then, though he might never love, he would not feel repulsion to me when I approached him! We cannot control our antipathies; it is so common a one too, the dislike to darker blood than our own. I know he has tried to overcome this feeling as unkind and unchristian; but, despite his efforts, it breaks forth, and now his undisguised affection for that fair woman shows how much it must have cost him to have been my companion, even the little time he has been. Would that I were European! even though plain—plain as the plainest! Poor—oh! poor enough to labour for my bread; for then, *if* we even met, it would not be with prejudice and disgust on his part. 'Poor black little girl!' ay, go hide yourself, and not dare bask in his eyes and the sun of day, like that fair thing there, poor butterfly!" And, unintentionally, she applied to Kate the epithet she so well deserved; for the lamp was unguarded, unshaded, round which she was playing.

If we could hear the opinions of ourselves uttered in our

absence, how many an excellent lesson we should learn; humility to the proud, exaltation to the lowly.

"Mrs. Adair, where is your handsome ward?" asked one man who had been seeking Mariam everywhere. "One never sees her except at dinner, or something impossible for her to escape from. She is a perfect violet, hidden from view."

"'Gad, worse than any such! Those you may find by displacing their modest leaves, but Miss Lincoln, never! Is she studious? or a misanthrope *femelle?*" inquired another.

"Indeed, I can scarcely tell you," was Mrs. Adair's answer. "I have vainly endeavoured to understand her; she is seldom two days alike in mood."

"I think her one of the handsomest girls I ever beheld," continued the first speaker; "there is a richness of beauty in her *brunette* tint, such as I never saw equalled, even amongst the ladies of Spain."

"I confess she is *rather* too dark for my taste," said Angelina, joining the group on Narcissus' arm; for neither were "archers." "I have always made it a question of doubt in my own mind, whether Cleopatra would have met many a Mark Antony in England. We seldom admire Ethiops!"

"Miss Adair means," interrupted Elton, dropping in amongst them, "that she questions whether any one else would have hung that Queen of Night, Cleopatra, in other gems, after it pleased her, like a greedy hussy, to melt down her pearls, and—

'Drink the treasure in a single draught.'"

A lawn of archers is like a crowd in a street; one stops, all stop. Thus a little group was collected, and the bows and arrows, except mental ones, at a standstill. When Elton spoke the last words, some one asked (one of those matter-of-fact persons who require chapter and verse for all—we think it was Narcissus), "From whom do you quote?"

"'Pon my life, I don't know," answered Elton. "I never remember my authors; and, by the way, I think it a most

ungenerous tax on our memories, a man putting his name to the nonsense he writes—it makes one look a fool not to recollect him. If I were an author, I'd shut myself up in a box, with air-holes in the top, like a boa-constrictor; no one should ever see me, and I would be fed with a quill through one of these! But, to satisfy the exacting, I think I am quoting from Goldsmith's *Animated* Nature! Cleopatra was so particularly lively!"

"Mr. Elton delights in apparent ignorance, and *bêtise*," sneered the amiable Angelina; "but here is one, I make no doubt, who can tell you anything which may be collected from *books*," and she looked towards Lady Montgomery.

"Why not yourself?" hastily asked Elton, to avert the fresh impertinence he saw looming over Kate's head; "your mother paid enough for your schooling, as folks say, and, with Miss Caffir for a female mentor, how be other than a walking library! But I forget; the pupil was possibly less apt than the mistress, for the latter certainly has outstripped her *now*."

With all his policy, Elton could not forbear this little revenge for all her bitterness to others. Angelina felt it, and the white lip grew livid.

"Were you appealing to me?" inquired Lady Montgomery, who had seen the look.

"Yes," quickly answered Elton, forestalling what Angelina might ask, and the manner of so doing. "Can you tell us the author of those lines?" He repeated them. She paused a moment, and replied—

"T. K. Hervey says:—

> "The Eastern queen who melted down her pearl,
> And drank the treasure in a single draught,
> Was wiser far than hearts that love too well!"

Unconsciously she commenced the quotation; but, as the last words fell from her lips, the tone accentuated them, and the *heart* echoed them in a sigh.

Involuntarily Adair pressed her arm; it was done without actual motive or reflection, beyond kindness for any one sad enough to sigh; but by mere trifles, empires may be overthrown. She coloured, something of an old feeling of passion shot through his heart, which trembled, as he hastily drew her aside, saying,—

"Another wager on the bull's eye, Lady Montgomery.—Kate, Kate," he continued, when they were out of hearing, "why will you be so stupid, so—I was going to say—unkind, in ever recurring to the past, best unremembered by both of us?"

This was not prudent on his part; it would have been better to have passed over the sigh and tone in silence. "Unkind!" she asked, looking up in his face with open eyes, "unkind to you? You do not feel what I struggle to conceal; you are a friend, a brother—you lose no opportunity of telling me so, lest I should forget it."

"I must *only* be such, Kate, you know that."

"Then I, Richard," she cried impetuously, "have less duplicity, more candour, or deeper affections than you; for I own I *never* shall forget the love I bore you, never obliterate it, neither seek *now* to do so."

"For mercy's sake, Kate, be calm!" he whispered, alarmed at her energy, lest she should be overheard; "what can urge you to speak and feel thus? If you really loved me, you would spare me the pain these memories must give me, vain and useless to-day."

"I know that," she answered in a more subdued tone; "but had you ever really loved me, I should not have been Sir Philip's wife. But by your coldness and indifference towards me, and love for another—ay, love for another, start as you will at my words—and trifling, Richard, towards myself, you have made me what I am!"

"Are you not happy, Kate?" and an almost sigh choked the words. He felt her reproach of himself was merited; for he had too lightly led her to believe he passionately loved her, at a moment when another held him in bondage.

"Happy!" she replied bitterly; "happy! when there comes one between me and even calm, and peace—love, I do not speak of now; legitimate love is impossible. I hoped for contentment at all events with Sir Philip in doing my duty, however painful to him, and succouring my poor father; and what is my fate? The latter is everywhere made a source of sarcastic reproach to Lady Montgomery, and by acting on the pride of my husband, makes him hate, where he might else have tolerated."

A bitter curse—one we will not record—burst from his lips against Angelina.

"Ay, curse her—curse another too—if you CAN; for she is the mainspring of all this sorrow, and yet, with all, I could find in my heart to pity her, were she not a cold, heartless coquette."

"To whom do you allude?" he asked, but it was to cover the feelings he did not wish her to see.

"Richard, Richard," was her almost agonized prayer, "be true to yourself—your own good, open nature, and not so false to me! You know well to whom I allude, the one who has ravished all from me; Philip loved—loves her still; and you, dearer than all, you love her—Mariam Lincoln!"

He was silent a moment, and then a nobler thought than any selfish temptation could have been, in alluring this galled heart to find rest on his bosom, made him say in low measured tones:—

"Kate! dear Kate! if it may save you from cherishing a vain hope, from indulging a deep but dangerous dream, I will own to you, that—well, after that day, so nearly fatal to us, at Highgate, when you fled, I gave myself up to the consolation of another's presence, and I almost grew to love Mariam." He could not hurt her by uttering the more unveiled truth, that he had—even at the time he wooed Kate—loved her rival.

"And she, Richard?" asked the breathless, agitated woman—"Scorns and despises me!"

"What a wilful thing the human heart is!" uttered she, in a tone of deep meditation.

The looming cares of this life made even a (generally speaking) thoughtless being like Kate grow fearful of those mysterious, hidden influences around her which she felt, and was forced to acknowledge the force of; "for here is a girl holding so many destinies in her hand, and she plays with them as a child with mere painted toys—defacing and breaking all around at her will. Sir Philip she rejected; and if woman's manner may be taken as index of her heart, she loves him, and by showing that affection now, estranges from me the regard which would have bred contentment in my career! You love her, and for that love have slighted mine, which would have reckoned any thing joy, so it won your heart; and all this is the work of a cold, heartless, selfish girl!" There was a pause, he could not reply.

"Speak to me, Richard!" she exclaimed—at last raising her voice, "your silence drives me mad! I am so truly wretched!" and the long-suppressed tears burst forth in torrents, as she flung on the grass the bow and arrows she had held, up to that moment, in her hand.

"For Heaven's sake, for mine, your own, be calm!" he cried, hastily leading her from the green to an alley beyond—"You do not know the ruin all this will entail upon you. Sir Philip will notice your agitation, your estrangement—Kate, Kate, pity me; for you little know how bitterly I reproach myself for all!"

* * * * *

"Richard and Lady Montgomery seem tired of archery, and prefer autumnal flowers and quiet alleys," said Angelina to Sir Philip, looking after the two, who stood near a cluster of dahlias; but their thoughts were far from any thing so fair, though as scentless, for the sweet odour of peace was fast flying both, even in outward seeming—Kate was becoming reckless of all.

Sir Philip made no reply; Mariam's absence wore his not too

patient temper. Poor madman! he had, like many another lunatic called by the world a sane man, never asked himself, "Where it could end, or avail his happiness, if Mariam loved him." Even with this feeling in his heart he felt jealous, not of his wife's love, but his own honour; and he bit his impatient lip into silence, lest he should degrade his anger and determination towards her, by giving it utterance to those around, who, his good sense told him, would laugh at his wrongs in whatever shape they might appear. He laughed, somewhat discordantly, 'tis true, and, calling to the others, approached the lawn and target, and, taking up Kate's bow, commenced trying his skill with a steady hand, which deceived even Angelina, who watched him narrowly.

Mariam again—there she stood at her window, watching still. Let us look on this scene as one of real life, of every-day occurrence, and let the too susceptible heart—one of the saddest gifts awarded humanity—take courage; and, until it is endowed with the power of reading others' hearts, not permit its own a hasty and too often erroneous judgment of the feelings and thoughts engendered against it.

The passing scenes will sufficiently convey our meaning. Could Mariam have heard what passed, the now sad, hopeless face would have been lit up with the joy which the once lonely heart feels when well and confidently assured of sympathy and friendship—things more stable even than love—but this, too, was hers.

She watched—and Richard's energy, Kate's emotion, even her tears, were not hidden from her. The merely human heart rejoiced for a moment, but one of revenge over their grief, and then the gentler, immortal loveliness came down, like an aureole, to adorn her spirit. A tear fell for a sister's danger and a brother's temptation, and a soft low prayer rose to heaven, as a star to hang in its planet-lit vault, beseeching that aid for them which heaven alone might give;—and twilight evening came. The lawn was deserted, the busy world within their lighted rooms, and still Mariam—poor India's child of mystic spells,

not foreign to her mind—stood almost superstitiously watching as the stars came forth, and each seemed to her a spirit's prayer, and she wondered if her prayer for them was registered among those glittering above her, it had been so heartfelt.

Alas! an answer came to her excited fancy. A star shot from heaven—lost to view. And she sighed deeply, as if her supplication had been cast down unheard, ungranted.

"Missy, im time to dress," whispered Leah, creeping gently towards her, and touching her arm. Mariam started.

"You there, Leah?" she asked hastily.

"Missy not angry wid poor Leah," cried the girl, kneeling and kissing her hand; it was the slavery of affection, not the servility of slavery. "But im be berry sorrowful now; missy nebber speak, nebber say kind word! Oh, im wish im dead afore im grieve so much! Leah berry wicked!"

The dark eyes dropped tears, which streamed over the dusky cheek, as pure and holy of sincerity and truth, as if the clear blue eye of England had shed them, and the rosy cheek paled beneath their gush.

And yet there are those who shrink in almost terror, certainly repulsion, from even the Indian, who has not the unhappy African's stain of slavery imprinted on him.

But Mariam would not have been one of these, even had she been a lily of our northern climate, she would have then done what now she did—raised the woman from her knees, and comforted her with words far dearer to poor Leah, in that she felt how little her mistress could afford to give, herself a beggar for sympathy.

But there is an inexhaustible source of comfort within our own breast, sent down like rain from heaven; and the more we give to others, the richer, fuller rises the well-spring within our breasts, ever flowing, never dried up. And as the gentle stream murmurs on, in the sun of an approving conscience, pretty wild-flowers come forth from the long grass on its banks, lending smiles and perfume through the long summer day of its life, for it flows a living stream onward to eternity.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"YOUR *toilette* is completed, is it not?" asked Philip, entering his wife's dressing-room some moments after the events just recorded; for Kate had been summoned, long before Mariam quitted her meditations at the window, to commence dressing for dinner.

"Quite," was the brief reply.

"Then your maid can be dispensed with, I presume? I wish to speak to you."

"Justine, you may go," Kate quietly said, without condescending to answer him; and, as the door closed, she dropped into an easy chair, which she drew towards the fire, for though the day had been delightful for out-of-door exercise, the September evening felt chilly, and with her pretty feet encased in a black satin boot on the fender, she sat quite prepared for anything he might please to utter.

When a man sees his wife taking things coolly, he is sorely puzzled how to get on with his harangue. He walked up and down the room a few moments, during which time she sat perfectly composed.

"Did you speak?" she said at last, resolved at any risk to break the unpleasant, silent preface.

"I am going to do so, and seriously," was his reply, taking a chair opposite to her, but without approaching the fire in a comfortable sort of way, as when two are going to indulge a cozy chat. No, he sat cold and apart, one arm on the table, looking at her. She half turned round, with a saucy, but quiet ease of manner, as if to say, "Now, let us begin, and who the winner?"

"I wish to lay a case before you, for your quiet judgment," he said at last.

"I have to thank you for esteeming my judgment of sufficient weight to do so," was her answer.

"A lady, a foolish, sentimental idiot of a woman, old enough to have known better ——"

"I don't think wisdom always increases with age, it grows very owlish and stupid sometimes; that is probably why that bird is chosen to represent it," she placidly interrupted.

"Allow me to continue without your very witty observations until the end."

"I beg your pardon; I thought you were going to amuse me with some *piquante* anecdote: seeing my mistake, I will listen in tranquil stolidity of intellect to your tale of some old woman, who, I presume, 'lived in her shoe.'"

"Your insolence, Lady Montgomery, will not divert me from a duty, however painful," burst from him at last.

She merely shrugged her shoulders, and he continued. "A lady, some few years since, was silly enough, from some absurd idea of feminizing her son's too robust mind, to throw him into the society of his tutor's daughter; in fact, they were domiciled for a length of time together. The lady was sufficiently —— I really can scarcely find a term to qualify her blindness ——".

"Call it arrant folly," she interrupted.

"Well, then (I see you can assist me), call it so; she was mad, foolish enough to suppose that a merely brotherly, sisterly affection would be the result."

"Mad, indeed!" uttered this reckless woman.

He continued, affecting not to hear, but his colour changed. "Time flew onwards, and this girl was thrown into the society of an honourable man, who—pitying her state, bereft of a mother's care, with a sick, helpless father, and, it must be admitted, not all unselfish, for he had a feeling nearly akin to love for her, one she might have ripened to that—married her."

Kate, with perfect composure, stooped and secured the lace of her *brodequin*.

"Instead," he continued, raising his tone, in deep indignation at her coolness, "of any feeling of gratitude on her part, no sooner his wife than she commenced a series of acts, a com-

bination of heartlessness, and want of all respect for herself, her injured husband, in every way compromising herself w the companion of her girlhood."

"How atrociously ill you tell a story, my dear Sir Philip! she said, impatiently. "You make one quite nervous, wit your 'A Lady,' 'The tutor's daughter,' 'The son.' Pray, do your i's and cross your t's! Give us names; or, shall I fill u the blanks? What do you say, for example, to 'Mrs. Adair,' 'Richard,' 'Kate Bateman,' and the *injured* husband—why, 'Sir Philip Montgomery?'" and she laughed sarcastically.

"By heavens, madam, your cool daring makes me question your sanity. But as *you* have chosen the names, under their banners we will discuss the point. And I, Sir Philip, tell Kate Bateman, that——"

"Stop, Sir Philip!" she cried, rising with dignity, and leaning one arm on the mantlepiece—"I am Lady Montgomery now, whatever I was; and—if *you* forget my title—permit me to tell you, you have little right to complain if I, ceasing to remember it, for one happy hour dream I am Kate Bateman."

He strove to speak, but she waved her hand almost imperiously, and continued,—

"You are not perfectly correct in your version of this tale. Sir Philip found, sought, pursued Kate Bateman, into the humble home her exertions had created for a sick father; he drew her into public, wooed her with professions of affection, which she felt from gratitude she should learn to return tenfold —*for she believed him*. Well, then, they married, and all her powers were exerted to make him a return for the affection which she deemed had selected her, from all others, to share his title and fortune. All was seemingly bright around her. When she looked upon her father's improved state, she blessed the author; when her husband was absent, she watched his return, to meet him with the happy thoughts her heart had gathered, from memories of his kindness." Her voice grew low and trembling as she uttered these words. Recovering herself,

she hastily added, fixing her gaze in stern coldness on the motionless listener,—

"Now, let us see the reverse of this picture. Scarcely have they re-entered society together, when she hears the whispered, or loud buzz around her of 'Sir Philip married her from *pique*, because Mariam Lincoln rejected him with scorn;' and, in proof of the sincerity of the world's words this once, his wife is slighted for Miss Lincoln, spoken coldly or harshly to; does she wear a colour or dress to please him, she is counselled to model herself after a heartless, unprincipled flirt, who refused the man's honourable offers to receive the homage of his dishonourable overtures! Now, Sir Philip, you read the true version, may it please and benefit you!"

"Benefit me, madam! in what?"

"By showing you what you have lost, and——"

"What I may lose?"

"The future I presume not to read."

"I am not surprised at the attack you have made on a virtuous, amiable girl: too often we seek to abase others to our own level!"

"Have a care, Sir Philip," she scornfully said, "or your words may make me, out of the pure love of truth, *not* stamp you liar!"

He sprang up,—

"Do you dare," he said with violence, "deny your affection for Adair?"

"Not more than you your love for Miss Lincoln,—with this difference, however: Mine is the affection which has grown with me, ivy round my heart, to quote an old simile, and that heart—oak; strong to cherish and sustain it, lest it should trail, perchance in the dust, at the feet of a——Miss Lincoln! Bad example is contagious; we should employ antidotes against poisons!"

"And for this *exalted*, romantic idea, my name is to be made a mark of scorn?"

"Hush! hush! *Sir Philip*," she proudly cried, "your name

will gain lustre by being attached to a cause more than deceiving one woman in marriage, and now openly vouring to seduce another."

"I forbid your familiarity with Mr. Adair, and I co you to cease calling him 'Richard;' these are low habits I insist upon Lady Montgomery's correcting these to stamp her, it is not wonderful I hear ever in my ears, the reproach of having married a mere daughter!"

"And pray Heaven you may never hear a bitterer r for having married her!" cried the exasperated, galled bitter contempt in her look and tone; "pray you ma yourself drive her to fling a slur on your name, whic generous action would have ennobled, in marrying a po had you treated her kindly. I grieve that the maligna of others, in reproaching me with my father's honest has made you so narrow in mind. Pity it is that my had not been *your* tutor; he would have, perhaps, i into your heart some of those nobler precepts of upri the want of which now force his child to despise you!"

Without glancing again at him, she quitted the room quiet composure, which left Sir Philip in anything but of perfect peace with his conscience.

It is very unsafe to go into court without, what lawye "clean hands."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Sir Philip felt, as he took his accustomed seat near Mariam at table, that certainly his hands were, in a figurative sense, rather soiled; he had permitted temper to carry him beyond the bounds of reason and common sense, or else he would have reviewed his own conduct before attacking that of his wife.

It was with a kind of bravado that he sought a place near Mariam, who with pleasure saw him approach, as his doing so prevented the attentions of others most unpleasing to her. Kate, from a feeling of deep indignant revenge against her husband, without hesitation sought Adair for her neighbour at table, and thus two, much interested in this game, were playing blindfolded into the hands of others.

We may imagine in how excited a mood Sir Philip found himself; angry with himself and every one. Mariam, for the first time, was rather startled by one or two observations of his, most unusual from a man who had hitherto scarcely alluded to the past. But he felt the necessity of revenging himself on some one, or in some way, and he thought, could she really be brought to even encourage his attentions by the slightest approach to acquiescence in them, he then might calculate on future plans; but her quiet acceptance of his society, her evident satisfaction in it, the motive of which, unseen by him, was not particularly flattering, led him into so many vain conjectures that he felt completely lost.

Mariam's solitary meditations, then her peace-making with Leah, had so much softened her heart, that a more than usually gentle manner led Sir Philip into a career of hope, down which he galloped in gallant style, nor dreamed of such things as hedges or hurdles to arrest him. A thought—not quite worthy of any honourable man—had taken sudden possession of his soul, from the result of his conversation with his wife; this

was, if he saw any possible hope of Mariam consenting to become his wife, in every way to favour Kate's attachment for Adair, that the probable result might release himself.

With this wild and incoherent idea in his mind, he became easy and entertaining to an extraordinary degree; not only was he a pleasing companion to all, but especially attentive to Mariam, who, won by the mirth around her, threw off much of her usual gloom, and surprised more than one present by her liveliness. Let her not be looked upon as a morose, habitually unhappy girl. She had been far different once; but though so young, the many crushing events of the past year of her life had acted painfully on her nature, making her feel lonely and despised in every crowd of joyous faces.

Dinner was over, and Kate's once happy countenance was overcast; she felt a sadness creeping over her, in proportion as her supposed rival seemed gayer. Her first impulse, on coming downstairs from her dressing-room, had been to brave Sir Philip by her open flirtation with Adair; but a better thought came over her—one of self-imposed suffering, it is true, but her conscience approved it: so she, so little used to control herself, became strong to bear. There is not a more vigorous virtue in the human heart than gratitude, and, despite all his change, all her own deception, the memory of acts of kindness to herself, and her father stole over her, and made the stubborn heart bend to bear, even if it broke. With this good intent she watched her opportunity during the evening to seek Adair, where they might not be overheard.

"I see you avoid me alone, dear Richard," she said sadly, "but do not fear for any future outburst on my part. I was led to it, maddened to it to-day, by the future before me; for I can no longer blind myself to the fact that Sir Philip loves, and, as far as her nature will permit it, is loved by, Miss Lincoln."

"Kate, you are wrong—doubly so; for why should she have refused him if any affection existed in her heart? More than this I cannot tell you, as to how I gained my information; but

of the fact I assure you, and by her own lips—she loves another."

"And you—you, Richard," cried the agitated woman, "know that other? It is yourself—is it not?"

"No, distinctly; positively, no."

"Oh! then," and her sad face brightened, "I can go in more peace. I will ask Philip to take me hence, and I will endeavour again, for all our sakes, to gain his affection, and perform my duty, however sad it may be. Forgive me, dear Richard, all my impetuosity to-day; but I never had a hand to guide me, and my own affections were all thrown on—why hesitate to own it?—you. I have been unfortunate in ever meeting Philip; for else, perhaps,——" she paused, and a blush of doubt croosed over her face. This woman, so imperious to her husband, stung by his insults, was all humility to Adair.

"Perhaps what, dear Kate?" he asked, gently.

"Oh, no! never mind—it was a vain thought; for though *now*, as his wife, I am sought and admitted everywhere, *then* I should still only have been the poor tutor's daughter."

"By all my best hopes in heaven, Kate, *that* would never have stood between us. Any man might be proud of your love—I am;" he spoke energetically, for he really loved her much, and it was, unfortunately, a daily increasing affection. He was not quite free from a mental reservation in what he uttered; he would not wound her now by again insinuating that another might have proved a bar to their union.

"Do not speak thus to me, Richard," she whispered, her heart bursting with the war within her; "for you make my duty the harder of accomplishment. I will—must go, or who may save me near you? I know my own weakness—I felt it once, and now I am less able to fight against your affection, he being so estranged."

"Kate, you are wrong in one supposition: Mariam Lincoln doos not love your husband, but whom she loves I know not."

"And you do not love her, Richard?—are you quite certain?"

"Pshaw! what a silly, jealous girl you are! Certainly not."

"Then I am satisfied. I know you would not deceive me even in that—you never did in anything—God help me! I sorely did myself!"

Her perfect confidence in him made his conscience give a painful twinge; but he silenced it with the argument, that it would be impossible to tell her the truth; yet truth would have saved him many an after pang. Men are self-confident creatures. She, poor girl, would have fled the danger; this was the good seed upspringing on a rock, but the warm sun was high above to scorch and uproot it. Adair urged her not to fly. Why do so? Was not their affection sanctified within brotherly, sisterly bounds? Why sever their ties of friendship? He should be lost without her; he had no fear of their erring, he was strong in his good and firm resolutions; only place her reliance upon him, and all would be pure and dear, as when they sate beneath the large outspreading oak on the lawn under the window, where she listened to this fond appeal.

He had found the right chord, and in recalling those pure happy days of almost childhood, he woke so sweet a tone in her heart, how could a dream of guilt bring its discord to unstring it? She promised to remain, never to lose sight of him, as far as her own powers might control her acts; and, as Adair pressed the hand he held in both of his, he assuredly loved her with a love which made the title "husband" jar on his ear.

But a better fate was at work for her yet than the one urging them onward.

Sir Philip had found means to lead Mariam apart from the others, who were all engaged in amusements consonant to the tempers of each.

"Do you know, Miss Lincoln," he said, "that I have many enemies?"

"You, Sir Philip?" she cried, in perfect innocence of his meaning. "How so?"

"I mean the many who envy me the privilege of sometimes being at your side; more so, I may say without vanity, however proud it may make me, than the rest of mankind here."

"The pleasure will not overwhelm you," she replied, with perfect simplicity of heart, "if it balance with the toil of being my cavalier sometimes; for I am naturally indolent, hating trouble myself, and, from the principle of doing as you would be done by, giving little."

"But even that little I am envied."

"By whom?" she hastily asked, a hope in her voice, echoed from the heart.

"Oh! yonder—and yonder—and yonder," he answered, directing a glance from each of the speakers on the lawn to Narcissus Browne, and there the glance paused.

"Pshaw!" she uttered coldly; "such butterflies, if they had nothing else to envy, would indulge that feeling towards the dormant chrysalis—nothing but a grub—not yet gay and gaudy. Envy is a part of their nature."

"I do not know you this evening; you are sarcastic. I like your own natural goodness better, Miss Lincoln."

"Am I? Heaven help me! I am a poor original, and ever borrowing from those around me. 'Tis the very atmosphere here."

"You are quite right; that is the reason why I regret to see you imbrued with its chilling rain."

"Say sleet, for it chills one's very blood. Rain comes welcome and soft in the sweet April day; sleet is the wintry north wind's tears; sarcasm, ice on the heart."

"All true; but we will have none of it. Now, tell me, why do you permit me a privilege I see unwillingly granted to others, and free men?"

She was on the point of uttering her thought, and saying, "Because you are *not* free, and consequently I am, from annoyance and importunity;" but as the words were on her lip, she felt there might seem rudeness in giving them utterance, so she paused hastily, and coloured deeply. His eyes rested on her

downcast ones, and an anxious searching look sought to read her meaning, which the quivering lashes concealed.

"You do not answer," he said at last, in a deep, tender tone, one long a stranger to her ear, he had been ever so guarded. His manner startled her; for her freedom from suspicion of wrong in his attentions had something in it of the Hindu widow's, who cast herself on her husband's funeral pile, not seeing the possibility of the heart once wedded ever owning another tie; this had been her self-imagined security with him.

She thought he loved Kate, as a man should his wife at all times, but especially the bride of a few months. So strangely alarmed had she become, that her words clung to her lips, and gave no sound.

"Where is your ring,—*the* ring—mine one happy night?" he asked, at last resolved to startle her into some tangible emotion, to which he might attach his further advances.

"Sir Philip!" she cried, looking up, and every gleam of colour departed, the eyes too seemed strained by the strong efforts to read him in his new character.

"That little ring, Mariam, which made you mine, me, what I have never been since—a hopeful, happy man. I am now a very wretched one; married where I cannot love, where I am detested; loving where I must never hope—must I, Mariam?"

"For pity's sake, Sir Philip, what do you, can you mean?" she exclaimed, in almost wildness of manner.

"Mean? all I say, Mariam. I have never loved but you, never shall. I married in *pique*, I scarcely know why; and my wife knows all—knows I loved, and love you—Mariam. Give me that little ring, and say—but no, say nothing; let me take it once again, and, should I ever be free, *I will restore it with a companion.*"

"Merciful Heaven!" she whispered, drawing her shuddering hands from his grasp, and pressing down her eyelids with them. "Has one uncalculated step led me to so much pain, such heavy retribution? Not me alone, but others!"

"The ring, dear Mariam—hush!" he cried again, endeavour-

ing to seize her hand. "You will be overheard—give me the ring! On my soul, I will ask no word, no pledge—make your own terms; the ring now, no longer given in haste, will assure me of your sincerity, and I will await the time of our union with patience, assured that the fate which has made you love me now, will reward our constancy at last."

Mariam, with many faults, had strong, unshaken principles of right and religion. Her every better feeling turned against this man, and herself too, for having been the cause, as she feared, of twofold misery to another, his unfortunate wife; first, in driving him in *pique* to marry her, and now to hate, for the sake of those false hopes, her very innocence of wrong had given birth to.

"Sir Philip," she said at last, in tones so slow and measured that she amazed herself, and left no place for hope in his breast, "you ask me for much which I do not possess; in the first place, that ill-fated ring. On that day when you restored it, I lost it. Unless you possess it, I am ignorant where it can be. I never asked you for it, because I did not wish to recur to a painful subject—but this believe, were both free, and that day to come to-morrow, there would be nothing changed between us!"

"Nothing? Surely I have not been again deceiving myself?"

"I am wrong in saying nothing," she continued, in the same cold tone; "there would be much changed between us. Then, in rejecting, I respected you; now, I despise the man who could be unprincipled enough to woo a girl for his second wife, and his first a young, hopeful, confiding bride."

She attempted to rise.

"No, not thus," he cried, grasping her hands; "one word more before you despise me. Review your own conduct since we met after my marriage. Have you not from the first found evident pleasure in my attentions?"

"I have, Sir Philip; pray, loose my hands. I will hear you to the end, *for the last time;* but it was because I felt grateful for your forgiveness of my much self-accused fault—and then,

pardon my ignorance of English customs, but we, Indian girls are taught the sacredness of married ties; we do not know those laws which seem to rule you. But I am wrong; I will not believe *any* virtuous girl would listen more calmly than I have done to a Sir Philip Montgomery."

Before he could detain her, she had sprung up, and was gone, but not far, alone; Elton, who, unseen, had been watching all, quietly grasped her hand, and before her dazzled sight could well recognize him, drew her towards an unoccupied ottoman, and seated himself beside her.

"Where were you going in that excited state, Mariam?" he asked; "going to commit suicide? or only homicide? and who was the victim to have been?"

"Pray, don't laugh, Mr. Elton; I am much agitated, deeply pained."

"So I perceive—but not by Narcissus Browne this time; for there he is, quietly talking to Mrs. Adair, though I will not swear that you are not the subject of his discourse, and the text, 'Matrimony is a holy estate;' and on his part, I believe, to do him only justice, without any reference to your personal estate——"

Mariam did not even smile.

"Don't look so grave, though I am serious in what I am about to say. Why not give Narcissus a patient hearing? Never mind his queer name. Obliterate from your memory the youth falling in love with his own shadow in the stream. Depend upon it, this Narcissus will only fall in love with you. I declare, unless you do, he will turn into one of those bilious-looking flowers to which the original youth gave their name, for he is quite yellow with jealousy. What was Sir Philip saying to you?" he thus adroitly brought out a leading question.

"Pray, do not ask me?"

"Oh! but I wish particularly to know; won't you confide in me?"

"I cannot, Mr. Elton; and when I say this, believe it arises

from no disinclination to confide in you, but from the impossibility, with delicacy, of doing so."

"Do not colour so deeply when speaking of it, people will fancy that I am making love to you." He paused, glancing at her with a peculiarly strange and inquiring expression. She made no reply.

"Bachelors have some timidity left; myself for instance," he said, still keenly examining her countenance; "but married men, none! And then they are so frightfully monotonous, all singing the same lullaby to hush their woes to rest! Robust, jovial men, endeavouring to persuade poor weak women that they have only to creep into some nook and die, because they married in 1851, instead of waiting till 1852 brought them acquainted with yourself!"

Mariam was evidently too much pained to enter into any discussion.

"Let us talk of Narcissus," he said at last. "Why not try and like him, Mariam? You know, do you not, that I have your interest at heart?"

"I firmly believe so, Mr. Elton."

"Then I will tell you, and I am now serious. Mrs. Adair is resolved you shall marry soon. She is your guardian. What can you do? There are those who will urge her acceptance for you of Narcissus's suit; disappointed themselves, they will revenge that feeling on you. Why not make a virtue of a necessity, and accept him?"

"Because I never should be happy with him."

"You are resolved?"

"Firmly—sincerely."

"I am glad to hear it. I only asked to prove you. Now, I will point out what you should do for your own happiness, and the salvation of another."

"What other can I have any interest sufficient to lose or save?"

"One you love—Richard Adair—Mariam. You love one another as truly as ever two loved; false pride and susceptibility keep you apart. If Richard come to you in kindness,

evincing a desire to be again friendly as you once were, will you give him a patient hearing and trial?"

"Mr. Elton, you are wrong in your impression about Richard; he loved Lady Montgomery, and, unfortunately for both, does so still," she energetically cried.

"Not as he does you. But you have only answered for him: yourself?"

"I do not love him," was the proud reply.

"Well, then, there will be the greater merit in marrying and saving him. Do you know on what precipice he stands? Sir Philip proposed once to you, and still loves, hating the wife he married in *pique*. Your recent blindness towards him, in the innocence of your views about marriage ties, has led him into a scheme as wild as criminal; neither more nor less than throwing his wife in Richard's way, and, should they fall into the pitfall prepared for them, procure a divorce and marry you! Something of this, though not in all its iniquity, he has just unveiled to you."

"Merciful goodness!" exclaimed the girl, her pure mind horror-stricken, and yet convinced he spoke with good cause; "have you dreamed this iniquity, or did you listen to us, and conjecture?"

"Ah, you see, I guessed right! then something *did* pass between you, of the sort?"

"It did, but not a hint of how his freedom might be acquired."

"Well, now you know it, I ask you in charity, if not in affection, save Richard."

"I cannot, Mr. Elton," she answered, in agony. "How marry him, even if he would, when he loves her, and feels a disgust to——"

"The little black girl! Ever the same too susceptible, erroneous idea. Do you imagine I would urge you, with the great affection I bear you, to unhappiness, even for his sake?"

"Convince me," she uttered at last, in a low tone, "that I am not an object repulsive to him, and if he ask me, I will marry

him, at whatever cost to my own feelings, which have hoped for more in marriage than toleration."

"Thank you, Mariam; now you are, indeed, a dear good girl. Depend upon me, *your* dignity shall be in all things respected."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

But, as has been said, a better fate was at work, one in kindly intent, to outwit the sin and sorrow watching for their victims. Sir Philip, foiled in his purpose to win Mariam to an acknowledgment of the love he still (prompted by his vanity) thought her nurturing for himself, resolved, by absenting himself now, at some future time to bring her to acknowledge the affection he, despite himself, honoured her for not too hastily avowing.

Sir Philip was not a villain, but a man of this world; only this was his doctrine,—as long as a person dealt honourably with his neighbour in mere every-day business, so long as he never openly violated his word, all else was fair, especially in love; and, somehow, he had reasoned himself into the idea that Kate had both deceived and ill-treated him in marrying him; he believing, at the time he contracted that marriage, that it would in some way, not clear even to his own mind, draw Mariam to himself. 'Tis thus we too often allow an idea to engross our minds, and when we discover all has been there engendered by mistake, we never blame ourselves for the failure of our desire, but revenge its non-success on another.

This feeling it was which made Sir Philip next day, to Kate's amazement and annoyance, inform her of his intention to quit the Grange. She had made up her mind to remain in quiet, relying firmly on two broken reeds,—her own resolution against

temptation, and Adair's assurance that nothing should
him to harbour a thought of her more than a brother mi
a sister. It is all very well promising no harbour to
thoughts; but, somehow, they watch until the harbour-m
is off his guard, and then, like piratical crafts as they are,
quietly into port, and blow up all around them.

Kate had felt a kind of proud pleasure in the idea of prov
herself in the furnace of temptation; it therefore little plea
her to be forced away by the peremptory commands of her hu
band. Only one person felt unqualified delight at their depa
ture—this was Mariam; for the presence of both was equall
painful to her. When Sir Philip pleased, his word was law to
all about him—even Kate had to bend to it; she, moreover,
was too proud to plead, and, with scarcely time permitted her
to bid adieu to any one, she found herself in their travelling
carriage, quitting the Grange, to visit Sir Philip's estates in
Somersetshire.

The journey was more than dull to each; it was beyond
measure irksome. She was too candid to affect a good intelli-
gence with him quite foreign to her heart,—he, too much
wounded to seek any relief in her conversation from the wound
his vanity had received at Mariam's hands; and thus they jour-
neyed on, each ensconced in opposite corners of the carriage,
holding a book, in apparent absorption in its pages, but in
reality only as a veil to conceal the play of the features.

Kate departed from the Grange, it became a living tomb to
Adair, one in which we are enclosed with all we have loved—
now a lifeless, unconscious mould of earth. The very thought
that Elton was urging Adair to approach her, and his unmis-
takeable coldness, made Mariam feel self-abased; for she was
playing blindfolded, she imagined, with those who held their
cards in the full light of day. She saw nothing, and in deep
error feared that, possibly in mistaken anxiety for her welfare,
Elton had betrayed her half-extorted consent to listen to the
ther, to Adair himself. But such was certainly not the case
Elton knew the heart of man too well, to hope ever to attain

a desired end by making the game too cheaply won; he determined to make Adair's wishes give birth to wakeful nights, these to doubts, doubts to hopes, and, not till well assured of his sincerity, condense all into crowning certainty. Unfortunately, Adair's mind had too many thoughts occupying it, to give one a fair and perseveringly wrought basis, on which might be elevated a temple wherein tranquil happiness might take up its abode. Embarrassed in his affairs, he needed that excitement which would obliterate thought and calculation,—he tried to approach Mariam, but there was an awkwardness of manner about her which made anything like reconciliation impossible; every word of hers seemed constrained to him, and his to her—a sarcasm.

Angelina had so vainly endeavoured to win Narcissus, that now, relinquishing every idea of him, she turned all her thoughts to a species of masked revenge, by urging her mother to further resolutely his suit with her ward. Angelina did so, much misjudging Mariam; and under the impression that, married to a man she did not love, her Indian temper would make this pleasant world (if we know how to take it) a hell to both. Even her keen sagacity had failed to discover the attachment Mariam bore to Richard, and imagined Sir Philip's rejection by her had been girlish coquetry, most bitterly repented on her part.

With these amiable thoughts at heart, she lost no opportunity of urging her mother to enforce, by every means in her power, the girl's consent; and unconsciously Narcissus made her bile the more active, in that he lost no opportunity of confiding his hopes and fears to her, just as he might have done to a male friend. It is bad enough a man not proposing to you, when you give him every hint to do so; but it is like a nightmare of mocking demons, when he treats you with confidential good-fellowship as one, for some reason to him most obvious, but to which your own intellect is perseveringly blind, placed without all bounds of inspiring, or feeling love!

The Grange is deserted, winter has passed, and many months

gone by, like hedges on a road, which *we* gallop past, though they seem to fly us. The months walk on, not faster or slower; but our minds give the impetus to all, and to the false impression, the *reality*, is a law of the Medes and Persians, altering not.

The season came round once more, Mariam unmarried, disengaged.

Mrs. Adair, merged by private inclination, and Angelina's promptings, into a perfect match-maker, quite as much so as if she possessed half a dozen penniless daughters, and by some fairy spell only a certain time to marry them in, as Cinderella had to be a princess. Every *likely* man was welcomed at her house, and Mariam's sight was dazzled day by day with every possible shade of man; and ever the same old song in her ear of, "By the clause in your father's will, you have little time left in which to choose."

Her sole comforter was Elton, and he was sorely puzzled what to advise; for Adair was seldom even a guest now in his mother's house; and Lady Montgomery——?

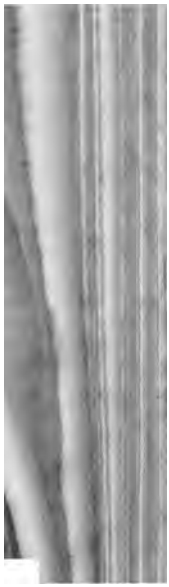
After the departure of herself and husband for Dyke Lodge, his Somersetshire estate, to their sullen journey succeeded those *pleasant* little bickerings which a husband and wife, in good society, know so perfectly well how to lay on one another's shoulder, a daily burden to bear; then came a calm and mutual disgust, mutually harboured thoughts of those no longer present. Bateman had been sent for by his child, hoping that his presence might at all events make Sir Philip a little guarded in his unkindness towards her; for a good, kindly heart had risen to the surface, floating above the weeds and mud at the bottom of the current of her life, and once again she resolved to try and win his regard. She cast all thought of Mariam aside, and, looking to the weak side of our nature, in justice she pitied him for his love, and, dropping a tear over her own for Adair, resolved to obliterate it, if possible; and on the principle of giving and taking, while she strove to make her husband forget, take a draught of Lethe herself.

We will not pretend to say that the resolution of this weak heart did not arise from Adair's absence; full of her sisterly affection, she had hoped his brotherly regard would have sought her shortly after her departure from the Grange. But whether he felt less confidence in the sophistry of all he had resolved, or whether, only *present*, was she an object in his mind, the only certain thing is, that he came not—he wisely kept away; and the husband and wife were thrown upon their own resources for amusement and companionship. To relieve monotony, she sent for her father—monotony to themselves, solitude or dulness to the old man, left alone in town. Bateman came, and almost her first hour of joy for a length of time was when she embraced him, and looked up in the unshaded eyes, which now perfectly saw her.

Sir Philip received him kindly, but there was not the cordiality which a love of a daughter would have engendered in the son-in-law's mind. Days passed, and still, amidst many thorns, Kate strove to discover and cultivate the good seed of reconciliation with her husband. Many, however, were the bitter hours she passed—hours of heartburning and crushed pride—the honest, wholesome pride of the heart, which, permitted to grow, makes all healthful around; the pride of a self-approving conscience, in having won the love, in unity and fellowship, of a husband and father, inseparable portions of herself. But all her efforts were vain. Sir Philip was civil, nothing more; and Bateman, despite her efforts at concealing facts, soon discovered, not only that he was an unwelcome guest, but that his child was a despised, neglected wife.

One wrong act of Mariam's had given rise to all this evil. Had she at first refused Sir Philip, his mind would have recovered its tone; no man is abased because a woman declines him; the worthiest meet this fate. But her acceptance, rejection, and subsequent kindness of manner, had so morally affected a nervous temperament, that a good man was made unjust and cruel.

These feelings were kept alive in his heart by the continual



one of yesterday.

Kate noticed all her husband's irritability
its motive, fancied her father's presence increa
indeed, placed in a most painful position, the
can be condemned to bear, between duty due
husband. Slow as Bateman was at percei
insults, he at last opened his eyes to facts,
observation convinced him that his presence
to Sir Philip; this was the more forcibly painf
with the kindness and thoughtfulness which
home with Kate some few months before.

He said nothing for days; but he watched b
her husband, and the result was, a perfect
Sir Philip's estrangement from her, though
mystery. Kate, who was unconscious of the d
father had made, and who was exerting all h
him in mental darkness, was painfully aw
dream of security one day, by the irresistibl
on his heart, which made him rise suddenly
and fling his arms around her bent neck,
tears.

Tears of infancy, tears of age—the ext

struggling from him, and grasping his falling arm in both her hands.

"My child—my poor Kate!" sobbed the man. "I am very wretched—very, indeed. I have watched you for days. I was doing so a while since, when your hands lay so cold and sad before you, Kate, my child. I have thought much since I was ill. I never pondered on many things before so much; and, as I looked at you just now, I thought how much sad eloquence there is in clasped hands resting on the knee, on which a young rigid face looks down."

Those now encasing his, trembled with the strong effort she was making not to weep.—"Father," she said, looking up with the caricature of a smile, for the mouth grimaced it, whilst the rest of the face was twitching nervously to repress her emotion, "you have been reading some sentimental book, and have grown quite poetical."

"The poetry of pain, my child," he uttered in low accents, as the tears coursed down his cheeks; "for it emanates from the full soul. You are unhappy, Kate; tell me why."

As he spoke, he dropped on the chair from which she had just risen, and drew her on his knee.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THERE was a time, in the commencement of her married career, that such an act of affection on her father's part would have been balm to Kate's heart, which had so often vainly essayed every means of winning him to some show of sympathy with herself—to draw him from the contemplation of his own sufferings. Now, it only harassed her, obliging her to a confidential tone, which for his sake, she felt indisposed to indulge in; for, in doing so, of necessity she should be obliged to admit her husband's estrangement; and how confess that, without wounding her poor parent, whom she loved so well, and making him feel his dependance. She knew her father was proud; education will thus make the most lowly, for it enlarges the mind, making it fully comprehend the littleness of others measured by its own.

Kate sate constrainedly, and like a guilty thing, on his knee, fearing every moment that her husband would enter. What more dreadful than the fear of jealousy between a husband and father? not the permitted jealousy of love, which makes us envious of the legitimate affection of even a parent, lest it should surpass what we ourselves possess, but that of a man conscious that a wife might in justice complain of his estrangement and unkindness. All this it was which made her sit uneasily on his knee, and, as his arms wound round her, her endeavoured to repulse him, and this the agitated man felt.

"Kate! Kate!" he sobbed at last, "has it come to this with you, too?—repulsed by all, scorned by all, a beggar living on charity—"

He said no more audibly; she turned, and those once sightless eyes were streaming with unrepressed tears—husband, selfish fears, all were forgotten, and her arms clasped his neck as she

pillowed his throbbing temples on her heaving bosom. What so holy as a daughter's love? Had Bateman in early life clung more to his child's affection, and taught her that he on earth was but foresent to give her a glimpse and faint idea of an eternal Father's love, this now weak child would have grown strong in herself to bear all her trials, knowing the rock against which she leant could never be shaken.

But Bateman had enwrapped himself in books and their love, despising and neglecting the beautiful pages of a daughter's heart, and now it was almost to her a dead language, foreign to ear and lips. She could scarcely understand him, still less hope to be understood; but yet his last agonizing words and tone smote every chord in her woman's heart, and as she wept with him, she prayed Heaven to enlighten her ignorance, and teach her how to love him with entire love; and far more, how to make him comprehend hers, teaching her to comfort him with it, as a daughter should.

But there is a voice of sympathy in every emotion which flows from a mutual source; and, while he wept for her grief, she mourned over his affliction and crushed pride, and in that close and loving embrace, they knew and loved one another better than in all the past years of her still short life.

Kate, we have said, forgot Sir Philip; but the watchful spirit of evil, ever around us, had not done so, and, guided by him, the husband entered the room just as she had soothed and consoled her father, by a little pardonable deceit, it is true, into the belief that Sir Philip was all kindness, but of odd temper; delighted with his, Bateman's, presence there, but of so constrained a manner of expressing himself, that the truth often became subject to doubt. But what was not open to doubt was her husband's manner of addressing her. Unheard he had entered, and her last words alone smote on his ear.

"Patience, dear father, all will yet be well; and you and I smiling and happy once again!"

"May I ask, Lady Montgomery," he asked, "in what you and Mr. Bateman are so unhappy beneath this roof, as for you

to be necessitated to preach patience to one, by your own showing in need of it?"

Kate forgot her usual dignity in her alarm, and she rose hastily in fear from her father's arms; it was not selfish terror, but a dread of what he might be a witness to. Bateman dropped the arms which no longer clasped her, and sat motionless, the traces of tears visible in the furrows of his face; on the smooth one of youth, they would have been at once effaced by her embrace, like mist from marble. Sir Philip saw them, and they steeled his heart; for he stood a criminal at a bar of justice—they were his accusers.

"Philip," answered she gently, with an imploring glance towards the other, "my father has scarcely yet recovered his strength of mind or body, and—and—"

"Why do you hesitate?" questioned he in irritation. "Uprightness and candour need no secrets, no double dealings between husband and wife."

"I know that, Philip; neither do I use such weapons as those you speak of towards you, or any, but—"

"The fact is, Sir Philip," said Bateman, rising, and passing a hand over his moistened cheek and eyes with a movement of shame, lest that humid trace should be seen, which action made her heart ache doubly—"I have seen for some time that my child is unhappy. I am a just man, Sir Philip," and he drew up his stooping figure with difficulty; and proud, too, though a poor tutor; and the first, justice, made me closely watch before speaking to Kate, lest she should be the one in fault. I have judged, and found her blameless."

"Mr. Bateman, can you assume to yourself to know all which may pass in your child's heart to wound or torture me? Some can inflict mortal pain, and no visible puncture be found."

"What can she have ever done?" asked the agitated man.

"I do not come here to accuse; I but ask of what do either complain, calling for patience?"

"Oh! pray, Philip, cease!" she implored. "I will explain

all; I alone am to blame; I used hasty, ill-judged words; I meant something else. My dear father fancied—fancied—I was not happy, not looking so; it was the reflection of his own poor haggard face he saw me by, he has suffered so much."

And she crept to the old man's side, and drew his hand between her own. "Kate!" cried Bateman, all the vigour of life restored to his tone and manner as he cast an arm around her, "you are *not* happy—you fear him. The woman who dreads her husband loves him not. 'Perfect love casteth out fear,' such should be yours for him, or the words which made you one were vain and lying; a loving wife—fearless wife, *never* would cling to even her father, as you to me, her husband by. I adjure you, Kate, tell me all!"

"Now, madam, I trust you are satisfied!" exclaimed Sir Philip with an explosion of rage; "not content with playing the victim to me, who took you from poverty to wealth, but you must persuade your poor, foolish father that I am a tyrant."

"Stop, Sir Philip!" thundered Bateman; "stop there! You have named yourself, no witnesses or accusers are required."

As he spoke, he covered the trembling girl with his arms; there was more agitation in her manner, than even her husband's violence, her dread about her father, seemed to call for. "I said I was proud," continued he, "and I should ill prove it were I longer to remain a burden on your charity. I thank Heaven," and he raised his eyes upwards, "I can see now; and the vigour of my mind is unimpaired. I will labour, as I once so cheerfully did, and in peace eat the sweet bread I earn."

"I might have expected this!" sneered Sir Philip; "those we serve most thank us least, as, for instance, your child."

"For what you have done for me," said Bateman, with a dignity his child was a stranger to, for rough passages in life bring out many unknown resources and energies, "I thank you, receiving it as I did at the hands of a man whom I supposed more than repaid for any kindness towards myself, by the blessing of so fond and good a wife as my Kate; but since you have shown me the contrary, I am forced most heavily to feel

my obligations; but they will not increase, Sir Philip, for this day I will relieve you of my presence."

Kate almost shrieked as she clung to her father; but she seemed incapable of uttering a word. Sir Philip, despite all he had said, was far from being a bad man; though now urged by conflicting emotions to injustice and harshness, his better feelings were aroused by the manner, and till now unsuspected dignity of Bateman.

"Far was it from my intention, Mr. Bateman," he said, in a hurried, confused tone, "to imply anything which should lead to such a decision as this on your part. I beg of you to remain; my home will ever have one for my wife's father. Kate and I may have our little differences of opinion; but I trust she is well convinced of my affection for her—are you not, Kate?" he held out his hand.

There is in woman's heart a fount of love ever flowing, never stilled,—it must speed on somewhere, even if it be towards a rock on which it breaks. A moment more she clung to her father, and then the arms relaxed, and she placed two kindly, clasping hands in her husband's, and, looking up in his face, her lips uttered in a trembling anxiety, which more than all the past in this sad scene spoke her fear of Sir Philip—

"Philip, I will trust your love; you cannot but grant me all that, when——but no—not all; I will claim a greater share for your unborn child, husband!"

What must be the unnatural dread and doubt of a man in a wife's heart, when she fears telling him that which creates the holiest, purest tie between them? Man forged the marriage one, Heaven created the other mystic link, which should bind two hearts better than aught else of earth. Verily the Jewish code, which makes the barren woman a curse, has in it a thought divine; for the childless marriage is an incomplete, unsanctified bond, wherein no angel and firstling comes, two in one, to stamp the parents one flesh.

A strange, almost unnatural thought of revenge, had made Kate for a length of time withhold this hope from Sir Philip;

she was well aware that, by that extraordinary and rather unaccountable feeling which actuates the generality of mankind, he was most desirous of having a son to perpetuate his name, when he should be dust before the wind. For months she had withheld this secret from him, a woman's revenge for slight and wrong, until at last the moroseness of his temper made her fearful of acknowledging it, lest that which raised an almost inconceivable source of joy in her heart, should be desecrated by his unnatural hatred of the unborn creature. Pity it is that happiness should be so fragile, a thing so easily broken—"precious porcelain of human clay;" for nothing could well have been purer than Sir Philip's joy, nothing more unalloyed than her contentment in the thought that her child would come in a father's smiles.

But to all joy there is a reverse of the picture. Old age is not easily moved to rejoicing, when the young life has been selfish. Mr. Bateman was stern and immoveable in his resolution to leave Sir Philip's, and labour for himself; this Kate firmly hoped effectually to combat, but nothing now could be done. Go he would, and did, and almost sunk again into former selfishness, enough to feel wounded by her firm refusal to leave her husband and his wealth, with him to toil anew as the poor artist!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Life is but a chain of events, each link fitting within link; nor is this chain one of purest gold to any—there is bitter alloy and dross mixed in it. Sometimes the links are broken awhile; but some cunning artificer re-unites them, and they run on again. The world does not see where the faithless gold gave way, but the wearer does, and never too firmly relies on the outward semblance of strength again.

Sir Philip was all kindness when Bateman was gone; but though Kate strove to be glad, and rejoice in her husband's changed manner, her heart would not consent to entire confidence, but kept ever whispering, "Remember the past."

Another cause withheld her from a too firm reliance on him. She could not conceal from herself, that all his attention had an origin purely selfish, arising from his anxiety about the paternal prospect before him. She was nothing in his eyes of herself, her personal claims to his affection as void as ever; but there existed the hourly care for the hoped-for heir. It was an all-absorbing thought; so much so, that poor Kate, whose married life had not even in this short space of time been the brightest, became so nervous at last, that every allusion to the coming event, which should have filled her with sweet joy, produced, on the contrary, a sensation so painful that the unbidden tears would not unfrequently start from her eyes in terror, lest the offspring should be a girl; for when the possibility of such a thing had been hinted to Sir Philip, a morose feeling of displeasure took possession of him, which he found it impossible to overcome for hours.

It may therefore be easily imagined how much she suffered from foreboding about the result, lest his wishes should be marred. So great was his anxiety, that no desire, however strong, of seeing Mariam, would have induced him to quit The

Dyke for town. Again a horrid "if!" Had all been as he wished, the whole current of events would probably have been changed; and he and Kate have become, if not happy, at least content to bear their chain in peace, padlocked together by their son's hands.

She had been very desirous of visiting town for a while, to convince herself that her poor father was comfortable; but of a journey Sir Philip would not hear, in her state. Bateman wrote despondingly at first; but of late his letters spoke of pupils and contentment, though he still evidently felt indignant with her for remaining with Sir Philip. A momentary, but false peace was around her, for Adair's name was never mentioned by either herself or her husband; but how hollow all this was, succeeding events proved. Sir Philip was continually building *Chateaux en Espagne*, which he peopled with thoughts of his son and heir; it was truly one of those maniac ideas, driving men mad—sane on all other subjects, lunatic on this.

Time and nature met, and Lady Montgomery's *accouchement* ran through the type of every recording newspaper, "of a son and heir."

Those who watch the rich driving, luxuriously cushioned, in magnificent carriages, through the streets of London, or who read recorded facts in newspaper paragraphs of joyful events, exclaim, "How happy *they* are!"

Envy them not their outward seemings! Half these are the sorrows and heart-burnings of creatures who would willingly descend from their gilded equipages, to be on foot, poor but happy, like many a toiling labourer. Many a newspaper's happy event is a curse—a heart-breaking! Such was Sir Philip's son and heir—for the latter he must be, unless death call him away—and he, the father, who had so watched over this event, heard,—

"Sir Philip, you have a son!"

"Thank God!" was the response; for all, the most hardened, unbelieving sinner, like the greatest saint, in sorrow or joy, instinctively thinks of him and the breath he breathed into

Philip yet come?—oh, pray, send for—seek him to share my happiness!"

But he came not. Some hours later the medical man returned again, and with him an unusual guest to any but a dying woman, the curate of the parish church. He was a staid, peaceful man, with a set mode of speech, and a coldness of manner not much calculated to win a woman to resignation. All have a separate vocation; preach he might, and well—console in affliction, never! But the doctor knew not who to bring to speak the truth. He could cut up a body; he might amputate limbs, close the eyes of death, but, somehow, he could not face a woman in her despair—that green spring plant, which has yet to bud, blossom, wither, and, after a life of these transitions, die!

The curate spoke of suffering, patience, crosses, hopes destroyed. But the voice was cold and monotonous, the eye undimmed; it was not as a father to a child—and then he talked of hopes destroyed! What were they to Kate—a living *boy* on her heart!

He spoke of our hearts' deception, and man's little knowledge of what really would make him happy, &c., &c. The doctor, who had hoped for more aid than he saw likely to be given him in this painful task, grew impatient in his real suffering for her, and when, in the midst of one of the former's exhortations, she raised her anxious cry for "Philip," he advanced, having previously sent all other witnesses away, and, taking the white hand which lay on the coverlet, said, in a husky voice—

"Dear Lady Montgomery, I might deceive you, or try to do so; but I have always found in my experience with sorrow that breaking it for days to a person doomed to hear it at last is far worse than the first shock. I have one to give you."

"Merciful Heavens!" she shuddered; "Philip is dead?"

"No; on my honour."

"Then he has met some dreadful accident?"

"No; on my word, he is well."

"Something detains him from me, or else he would have come

long since to embrace his boy; let me go to him." She made a vain attempt to rise.

"You could not—but you admit that his anxiety to see his *boy* would have brought him, but for some most untoward circumstance!"

"Oh, I am sure, most sure of it!"

The curate endeavoured to interpose, not approving of the other's mode of treating the subject; but the doctor hastily interrupted him, he had brought his patient to the focus he desired, one he felt safest.

"And," he continued, "you know, then, that so great was Sir Philip's desire to have a son, worthy of his name, worthy of such a mother as yourself, that if the contrary happened, he might in disappointment, and to spare you the pain of witnessing it, absent himself awhile, through real affection for you?"

"Speak, for mercy's sake speak!" she cried. I cannot understand you! How can I, and my boy here, my own fair child; what fairer could he desire?"

"Lady Montgomery, may that poor boy bless and reward you for your love, and comfort you in all affliction; your husband has left you only for a few days, that you may not be pained in witnessing his grief for both of you. As you say, your child is a fair, sweet boy to the eye, as he lies beside you; but—he is a cripple for life! Heaven so willed it!"

"Oh, my God!" burst from the quivering lips as the stricken mother fell back fainting.

"And may God help her!" uttered the kind man, raising her in his arms and bathing the cold, damp temples.

"You have killed her!" said the other in alarm.

"No, not that—but saved her!" was the reply. "Your words irritated; I saw that wouldn't do. Had we left her, some well-meaning person would have *broken* it to her, and perhaps, before I could arrive, delirium have ensued. *Now* she is in my hands, and sleep will follow this fainting. I shall not leave her; for, after sleep, I trust the keenness of her anguish will have passed, and she be saved."

sanctifying kiss of a mother's love made no impress
the more she caressed, the more mighty grew her lo
it became as the gnarled bark of the oak, incasing
of the tree for centuries, where all else should fade an
beside it.

It was, indeed, a holy love, for nothing of earthly
vanity desecrated it; she had received a gift from
and, as coming thence, it could not be but good—
she cherished it. Kate could not blind herself to her h
motive in flying them, but she uttered no complaint. Th
seemed all changed; hopeless now of ever winning l
still she was resolved to suffer all; and, if it might be,
to, at least, kindness towards his child. She felt a ha
to the poor afflicted thing would turn her soul agai
even though the boy was insensible to it.

Strong in her mother's part, she rose from her bed,
to defend and shield her offspring from all who might
will to wrong or injure it; and when Sir Philip retur
mother did, what the wife would not have done alone—
him smiling, without one complaint. She pitied wl
might justly have condemned; but even this could r
him. A sullen, unconquerable hatred of herself, and
towards her child, influenced him; there was but on
death, else this deformed creation would become h

CHAPTER XXXVII.

KATE would gladly have remained at The Dyke, nor ventured to town; she had an instinctive dread of what a residence there might bring her in the estrangement she too plainly saw, existing, between Sir Philip and herself. Much she hoped for from time; but the present state of things was hard to bear with. Nothing could induce him to stay an hour longer than was necessary at The Dyke. Indeed he endeavoured to persuade her, that it would be better for herself and child to remain there; but a wife's and mother's duties were too strong in her heart then, for her to leave him alone in temptation, to fall perhaps, and none to save. Besides, she hoped so fondly that he might yet turn in less hatred towards his poor neglected boy, on whom he would not now even look.

Impatiently Sir Philip hastened the day for their departure, since she would not consent to remain.

In decency he could not but escort her to town; he was one of those advocates for public appearances, before which all private slights and injuries counted as nothing—nobody saw them, no one had any right to suspect them. Thus the Montgomeries returned to town, and no sooner there, than he again plunged into every gaiety, to seek one who had become more than an object of affection and pursuit to him, an oppressive and restless weight on his mind, incapacitating it from any healthful action; and while he rushed off, after an ever-flying vision—Mariam—his afflicted, and yet not comfortless wife (for she loved her poor deformed child so well), spent all her time nursing the object of his disgust, and in visiting her father, who, at length, became reconciled, in justice, to her, whom he had so unreasonably accused and condemned.

All seemed the same in town, in *statu quo*, as when Kate danced, the tutor's humble child, on sufferance at a few balls.

Those who rush on railway pace through a novel as through a country, will cry, "What, a whole year, and so little change!"

But, dear readers, we are aiming at nature and truth. Look around, among the many families you know, and you will possibly see year follow year, and the circle remain unbroken even by a marriage, and here you have one, and the birth of a son and heir to crown it.

It was this latter, this hapless child, which caused so much misery; it was ever brought before its repudiating father, in the shape of congratulations from well-meaning friends, who knew nothing of the boy's infirmity.

When Sir Philip carried off his wife so suddenly from the Grange, it was no longer permitted Adair to doubt, that jealousy was the motive which induced the act; and while, on the one hand, it pleased him in the assurance given, that to be jealous, Sir Philip must love (over-looking the fact that there is *more* jealousy from *self*-love than any other); on the other, he became so thoroughly tired of all society, she not there to enliven it, that with nearly as little ceremony as Sir Philip had used, he quitted the Grange for the Continent, resolved there to banish all regretful thoughts of England, in gaiety and fresh faces. Before he quitted, a silent rupture had taken place between Mariam and himself; they never spoke, unless on subjects the most commonplace in society, and each felt perfectly convinced of the hatred of the other. So much for man's intellect when prejudiced.

Bateman was residing in a very humble lodging in town, supporting himself entirely. With the inherent obstinacy of his character, he refused the slightest assistance from his child; and shortly after their separation was suffering much from many privations, of which she was kept in ignorance. With a little perseverance, however, he obtained a few pupils, and when Kate returned to town he was not without the necessaries of life, which had well nigh been the case at first; for by no cleverly invented means could she induce him

to take any assistance, coming, as he knew it must, from her husband.

We now find all much the same as when Sir Philip first married; and on a bright May morning, Lady Montgomery drove to Eaton Square, to pay her first visit to Mrs. Adair. She had been out so little since her arrival, which was only a week previously, and had seen no one to inquire from, for Sir Philip rarely spoke to her except in monosyllables, that she was in ignorance of everything passing in the Adair family. Indeed, so absorbed had every better thought become in the task imposed upon her, *more* from her boy's infirmity than her actual position of maternity, that she had avoided making any inquiries about Adair, resolving, if woman's good-will might do it, to banish him from her thoughts; for now she held an honour dearer than her husband's in her keeping—her boy's good name.

When she entered Mrs. Adair's, nothing seemed changed since the previous year there; it appeared as if she had had a painful dream, and others, their lucid, waking, everyday existence.

Any person looking on, ignorant of the mere surface in almost every fashionable friendship, would have imagined her to be the pet of the family—the dear friend, long and anxiously expected. Mrs. Adair embraced her on both cheeks; Angelina—for her, most warmly pressed her hands; and the one who perhaps felt the most kindly towards her kept aloof, and only bowed, where others wished their hollow wishes of joy.

Kate was so perfectly well aware of the cynical character of Angelina, that when she commenced expressing deep regret that Lady Montgomery had not brought her dear boy with her, this lady was immediately on her guard against the shafts she expected momentarily. Poor Kate, though saying nothing on the subject, was most acutely sensitive respecting the infirmity of her boy, not alone for himself, for she felt as if her love were all-sufficient to shield him against all; but her husband's estrangement in consequence, had made her so nervously

susceptible, that she felt at times as if the poor infant had sc fearful leprosy, to make all fly him and herself.

Angelina's inquiries, however, arose from a lingering ho of appearing *a woman* (a thing she began to question) Narcissus's eyes; for he appeared completely to regard her some neutral creation not yet classed by naturalists, incapabl of entering into the human feelings of a woman—still less, mother. He was there; so she resolved to try his heart b her warmly expressed interest in the newly-born. When we have a sore point, how we shrink from every touch approaching near it; we are very lapwings, fluttering and shrieking at a distance, to lure all from their nest.

Kate's painful embarrassment was not a little increased by the unexpected arrival of her husband, who seemed little pleased to see her there.

The meeting between himself (it was the first since his return) and Mariam, was reserved on his side in outward seeming; on hers, cold in the extreme. No one knew the depth and purity of this much-mistaken girl's heart; it was full of generous feeling, but a fear ever withheld her from evincing any. Something—that uncontrollable sympathy whose birth-place is in the soul, hidden from human search—made her, since the other's marriage, long to speak more freely than she had hitherto done to Lady Montgomery. She felt she was not happy, and she also felt that it might be a mission her heart was called to, to solace this poor pilgrim, who had chosen one of the rougher roads to home, though in the world's eye a bright and happy one. No one, of any discernment, could be ten minutes in the society of Sir Philip and his wife without perceiving that for some cause they were perfectly estranged. He had one virtue—he was no hypocrite; and, falsely imagining himself in every way injured by Kate, both in his marriage and in the birth of this blot to his name, he took no pains to conceal his disgust, he rather proclaimed it.

"We have just been congratulating Lady Montgomery on the recent auspicious event," said Mrs. Adair, "and blaming

her for not bringing the boy, with his nurse, to see old friends like ourselves."

"You must be very proud of your son," chimed in Angelina, glancing at Narcissus, who was cutting the pages of a pamphlet.

"Philip is not fond of *very* young children," hazarded Kate, timidly, seeing the gathering cloud on his brow; the woman was all changed since she had a child to protect, for its sake her *hauteur* had disappeared, and she was all fear and watchfulness.

"Pardon me, I *do* like young children," responded he, "when they are such as call for affection."

"What a strange speech!" laughed Angelina, with her cold effort at gaiety.

"You really, Sir Philip, imply that your own is a disagreeable one!"

"Philip means," answered Kate hastily, her hitherto pale cheek dyed with blushes, "that our boy is rather cross; so he is, poor child! He is not very well, and at times peevish."

Mariam fixed her full eye on the face of the speaker, seeming to read her inmost soul.

"What is your boy's name, Lady Montgomery?" asked Narcissus, intending to ask a pleasant question of a young mother.

"Richard," fell from her lips, and the blush on her cheek deepened—deepened with regret and annoyance; for this had been one of the worst steps she could have taken against her husband's ever liking the boy.

One day, in his indignation and disgust, he had ordered her not to christen it after himself, and, instead of doing so—a thing which would eventually have pleased, inasmuch as *all* like a little flattery, and this would have been so very natural a proof of a lingering love on her part—she permitted a glimpse of her former hasty, thoughtless temper to guide her, and hastening off, had the boy christened "Richard." If any one thing could have added to the father's hatred, this did from

that moment; he never permitted it to be brought into his presence, and, as she persisted in nursing it, the breach widened even to separate apartments.

"How very strange!" exclaimed both Mrs. Adair and Angelina in a breath. Mariam's heart leaped, and still no feeling but pity rose predominant; there was to her keen perceptiveness, rendered doubly so by her affections, so desolate a tone in that one painfully pronounced name, that the Christian triumphed over the momentary feeling of woman's jealousy, and reading a whole history of sorrow, even perhaps *guilt*, in Kate's manner, she rose, and with a freedom from all embarrassment new to her, approached where Lady Montgomery sate, seeing, without knowing why, that the subject pained her, and, drawing a seat close to hers, said, holding up the purse she was knitting,—

"Lady Montgomery, I think I saw you making a purse like this at the Grange; I am dreadfully stupid—will you show me how these pearls are to be turned?"

Kate looked in surprise at the cold girl, who heretofore had never once directly addressed her; the memory of something once uttered in her defence crossed her mind; she raised her eyes to Mariam's, and met hers, fixed upon her so full, so pityingly, that she mentally exclaimed, "She has the most beautiful, soulful eyes I ever beheld; they *cannot* be deceitful."

"Willingly," smiled Kate, drawing off her gloves. Sir Philip frowned; sympathy towards his wife was reprehension of himself.

"Is Mr. Adair godfather?" asked Narcissus, who never could see when mundane things went wrong.

"Oh, pray, Mr. Browne!" exclaimed Mariam, firmly and impatiently, "have a little mercy on poor Lady Montgomery. However excellent a mother may be, she, like others, requires recreation from the cares of her nursery. You cannot see distinctly here," she added, addressing Kate, "if you do not fear the trouble, in the inner room we shall have more light."

"Really, Miss Lincoln!" exclaimed Angelina, annoyed at

the interruption of what she plainly saw was a disagreeable subject, to unravel the wherefore all her energies were exerted, "you have a most dictatorial manner—I might add, were it not for your advantages of——"

"Face or fortune?" interrupted Mariam, with a liveliness of manner to which all were strangers; but this poor girl was only spirit-broken as regarded herself—the oppressed had ever a warm advocate in her.

"Lady Montgomery will forgive me, I am sure—will you not?" she continued, addressing Kate, who had risen with alacrity to follow her; "for I have removed for a while from her sight the paraphernalia on memory of the nursery."

Kate could not speak; much trouble had so subdued her; she felt, to utter a word would be to lay all her sorrows in weeping before those present, who would have rejoiced in them. There was nothing said in thanks; but her tone was so gentle in its intonation, as she directed one who quite as well as herself knew the intricacies of the purse she held, that Mariam was well rewarded; and while she pondered on the meaning of the scene, felt convinced the truth about her child was known—but how? was the puzzle; and while Sir Philip sat half-concealed by the back of a *priedieu*, turning over some drawings with Angelina, a servant flung open the door, and rushing in hastily, half unannounced, Mrs. Bruce appeared. Angelina was facing her; she nodded; Sir Philip's back was turned, she was too full of her news to notice who he might be.

Lady Montgomery and Mariam were apart in the embrasure of a window. Mrs. Bruce was one of those who never take precautionary measures, consequently the results of her love for tale-bearing were not always pleasant to herself.

"Oh! my dear Mrs. Adair," she exclaimed, grasping her hand, "I have just heard the most awful event" (her back was turned to all the others). "But I knew," she continued in a breath, "that a judgment would overtake her—did I not always say so?—for her iniquitous conduct towards Bruce, poor weak fool!"

to others.

"Why, of the Montgomeries, to be sure," she r
turning. Mariam spoke loudly to deaden the voi
cried, "Mrs. Bruce, Lady Montgomery!"

The rest was lost in the former's loud tone of
Angelina affected to be incapable of interrupting
Adair uttered "Hush!" but nothing could silence

"I know what you would say," she continued,
uncharitable; but, my dear friend, we are only f
and I know it will not go farther."

Malice and curiosity let her run on; good-will
easily stopped her.

"Only fancy," was her voluble cry, "what Sir I
and indignation must be—he who longed so much
Well, now he has one!" and she laughed alou
maimed, deformed——"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"For Heaven's sake, Mrs. Bruce," exclaimed Mariam, springing towards her, and seizing her arm, "hush!" Mrs. Bruce, so energetically summoned to silence, looked round, and, dropping into a chair, gave a hysterical kind of giggle.

"Indeed, Sir Philip!—indeed, Lady Montgomery! I did not see you, or I never should have hinted at this painful event; but I was so shocked when I heard it, that some excuse may be made for my wishing to unburden my mind."

Kate could not articulate; she grasped the arm of the chair on which she was seated in cold agony. Her heart felt turned to ice, foreseeing all which might accrue to herself from Sir Philip's fury at the publication of this misfortune, which she had so sedulously concealed from all except those immediately about her child; and even these she had enjoined to secresy, for her husband's sake, not her own; for, had the boy been a model of beauty, it would probably never have been half so dear to its mother as this poor little helpless creature, which claimed a so much greater share of her love, for the disgust borne towards it by others. Every word Mrs. Bruce had uttered cut Sir Philip to the soul in what he had of pride; he said little, but the pale cheek denoted his bitter annoyance.

"Mrs. Bruce!" was all he uttered; "you might, perhaps, fulfil a happier office than promulgating truths, the more painful that they are so, to the world; yes!" and he glanced at Mariam, who stood near Lady Montgomery, silent and pitying, yet not daring to give utterance to her sympathy, lest the wounds of this suffering woman should burst out afresh, as they are said to do at the touch of the murderer; for something told her that in all this sorrow she had a share to atone for.

"Yes!" he cried, "our first—my heir—is a cripple!"

"But not the less to be loved for his affliction," said energetically: "we should pity those so afflicted, an ever a forerunner of love."

"And he is so patient, so gentle, my poor boy," alm pered the mother, glancing imploringly at her husban

"I am sure I grieve for what has been said exclaimed Mrs. Adair; "but why let such an evei you so deeply, he will not probably be the sole cla your affections."

"Madam, you forget," said Angelina, resolved should soothe poor Kate's heart—she was so enviou tutor's daughter—"that this poor unhappy child wi representative, by priority of birth, of Sir Philip's nar

"Perhaps it may not be an irremediable infirmity, r said Mrs. Adair, really in kindness; "what *is* the ma him? Why did you never speak of this before? I grieved to hear it for both your sakes."

"For the love of Heaven! Mrs. Adair, cried Kat and clasping her hands in irrepressible agony, " most painful subject drop; you little know the gives me."

Narcissus looked up, and said something not devoic ing, about "bearing our crosses with patience."

"That is the very thing I fear you do not do, La gomery," sighed Angelina, with a hypocritical drawl the privilege of one who knew you when herself learni a wholesome lesson, from your father's teaching, and s way to you in charity. Oh, if you would benefit by tl of our most loving and zealous pastor, Mr. Browne!"

Even *this* won her not a step in Narcissus' favour. unluckily then thinking how much improved Mar become of late—a year had so greatly matured her be stamping it with more confidence in her self-reliance, different to self-esteem.

"Is Mr. Adair at home?" asked Sir Philip abruptly, to change the conversation.

"Of course not," sneered Angelina, who had been watching the direction of Narcissus's eyes; "we never see him now."

"He *says* he is studying, does he not?" asked Mrs. Bruce; "does any one know what?"

"Or where?" fell from his sister.

"I trust I may be more fortunate in meeting him when next I call," said Sir Philip, rising; "I wanted to speak to him about a lady's horse I wish to purchase from him, and which he purposes selling, I hear."

"A gallantry for your wife, I presume?" asked Mrs. Bruce.

"I never ride *now!*" fell from Kate, who had sunk, almost overcome with her emotion, on her chair.

Mariam sighed, yet not audibly; for the sale of this horse, which had been purchased to please her, seemed another and last tie broken between herself and Richard.

"I have no direct object," said Sir Philip, carelessly, "except to buy a fine animal, useless to him, and which Lady Montgomery may make use of if she please."

He spoke more graciously than usual, not wishing all to know the real state of estrangement between Kate and himself. As he spoke, he rose and said,—

"Kate, if you are going towards Pall Mall, will you drop me? I have sent my brougham away."

"Willingly," was the reply, and the alacrity with which she rose, fully harmonized with the word. How much we can forgive, for the sake of benefiting those we love; she never for an instant lost sight of her boy's interests with his father.

Mariam had stood by her; the first impulse of defending her gone, she feared intruding where an evident prejudice had existed against her; but when Kate turned to wish her good-morning, their eyes met, and involuntarily both extended a hand, the first time theirs had ever met.

The carriage rolled away with the husband and wife, leaving their characters indeed behind, to be lacerated by envy.

Sir Philip had no longer the feeling of policy to guide him, and the reality of his disposition towards Kate burst forth with double enmity from his having been in Mariam's presence. Sarcasm followed sarcasm, until at length he declared his firm intention of sending the hated child of her love from home, that at least the eyesore might not for ever be before him, and people ever reminded of its existence, to reproach him with it—in fact it should be as if it had never been.

Heaven might in mercy take it; if not, none would know it until he should be removed from all suffering on its account. He could not see why the law should forbid the putting away an object, disgraceful to the family it would otherwise represent, as well as the permitting a husband to divorce a faithless wife; either was a blot on the escutcheon of a line, hitherto *sans reproche*, for most generally, the mind bore the imprint of the form, and the cold cynical heart, and venomous tongue, were as mirrors in which the deformed reflected themselves, through vengeance, in all their hideousness on mankind.

Kate bit her lip; the heart feared to give utterance to its suffering; her aim was conciliation, but how she hated and despised the man at that moment! How immense the barrier he was raising between them! one, nothing could overleap. Much more he said, until, maddened by her silence, he swore by Heaven he would consult the law, whether in equity this child could claim its right by birth!

Oh, then! with these cruel, unnatural words, all the woman—the right judging woman—was roused within her, and far more—the mother.

"And you dare," she cried, her nostril dilating in scorn, "to name Heaven in so diabolical a cause as this repudiation of the creature it has afflicted so much! and to me, the mother, who in hope bore its burden for so many months, and in deep, though sorrowful love, these three! Oh, I would I knew Heaven better, that I might confide more in its care for my helpless boy—for *I fear you!*"

No words can adequately convey the force of these last

words, and the action as she uttered them, which made her shrink from him into a corner of the carriage, removing even her dress from all contact, as though he were to her accursed, and an object of loathing—he stared speechless at her an instant, then hastily pulling the check-string, muttered under his breath,

"Well, madam, we shall see! for the present I leave you to your ruminations."

"Yes, go!" she whispered, as the carriage stopped, and the man appeared to let down the step; "go, and may God pardon you, for you are so bad a man I fear you!"

Without a word he descended, and Kate gave the order, "To Mr. Bateman's," and the carriage rolled off, the envy of many who looked at its well-appointed *ensemble*, and lovely though pale occupant, for sorrow had matured the baby face to one of expressive beauty; and these many dreamed not of the aching grief, whose strong life was counted by the quick beating of her almost breaking heart.

"Mr. Bateman not at home!" she exclaimed to the girl who opened the door, for she had descended at once, herself "Then I will walk in and wait. Will he be long?"

"I think not, my lady," was the reply; for his pupil, who comes nearly every day, is waiting for him in the little back parlour; will your ladyship please walk into the front one?"

"Anywhere, I care not, so I see him. And has it come to this?" she cried, pacing the room when the girl had closed the door. "All gone, all gone—my early hopes, my married ones—and now he would take my child!—No, by all a mother *can* do when she will, he never shall." And the quick step broke in measured, but hurried tread on the ear.

Up and down that room she walked, the groan not unfrequently bursting from the impatient bosom, as she turned disappointedly from the window, where she paused at every turn, to look out anxiously for her father.

"Oh, Richard, Richard!" she exclaimed aloud in her im-

patient agony, "would I had dared all, done all, to prove my love and win yours, sooner than this life of misery!"

Poor Kate! she knew not that remorse would have stood ever between her and true happiness; and the deeper her love and sacrifices, the less man would have appreciated them, as things too cheaply purchased by him, even though a woman's life and immortal hopes went in the scale to balance his love of a day!

As she spoke, the door of the inner room very gently opened, and some one entered,—when she turned, her spirit cry had summoned a companion, and Richard Adair stood there.

"Kate!" he exclaimed, smiling; "Kate, and in heroics?"

"Richard!" and the arms were round his neck, reckless, clinging, yet without one thought of harm; he was only to her some one in whom her heart might trust, some one to smooth the rough pathway for her bleeding feet.

"Oh! thank Heaven you are here, but how?

"How? never mind; instinct sent me of course to see Bateman, knowing you would come; but what has occurred, dear Katty?" and, loosing her arms, he seated her on the sofa, and fondly, as a loving brother might have done, held both her hands in his own.

The tongue untied by the assurance of one to sympathize with her, she commenced telling him the tale, so little suspected, of all her wretchedness, her misery about her child. As she spoke, the tears almost suffocated her.

"My poor girl—my poor Kate!" he tenderly whispered, really affected enough to feel the eyes dim with those tears which disgrace no man. "I never dreamed this; I will own to you, I feared a little prejudice against Sir Philip made you harsh in your judgment, and not always quite just; forgive me, darling Katty, and may God help you, my poor girl!"

"Direct me, guide me, Richard. Tell me what I can do, for my trouble is very bitter; for myself I care nothing *now*. We grow unselfish when those we love best on earth are in sorrow, supplicants on our sympathies; I only think of my child—

what he may have to endure, when sense will make all so acute to him."

"Your poor boy, your unfortunate child, love him, cherish him well, Kate; he will reward you some day, believe it so. Do you know, dear girl, so grossly selfish are we, I——" he paused suddenly.

"What, Richard? what where you going to say?" and, releasing one hand, she placed it upon his shoulder, and looked up confidingly in his face.

"Never mind," he answered, "I ought not to say it; you must love your boy now, let *that* fill your heart."

"I read half your thought," she replied, sighing deeply. "I must love none other now; it is a holy love, that of a mother for a deformed child, it is so entirely hers, and Heaven's. No one else cares for it. Fear not, Richard, if he, Philip, will but leave me in peace, and you comfort me as *you* may, and *I* accept, I will place no unholy affection beside my afflicted child; only do not desert me, I have none but you."

"I never will, Katty, never!" and he drew her in all kindly affection, and indeed in purity, on his bosom. He had too noble a nature for a sensual thought to mar his generous one for this suffering girl.

"And now tell me your thought," she said.

"Oh! a foolish, bad one. I had loved you so well once, that I felt jealous when I heard of your son's birth. I knew you so well, I felt your pure heart, however temptation might have led you to harm (you see I am candid, Kate), would turn, all engrossed by its tie of duty and love, to your helpless child; forgive me the bad, selfish thought, which made me fear the loss of the affection you possessed for me."

Such confessions are ill-judged, and most criminal; they *can* alleviate no pain, and cherish affections better forgotten. Adair felt this, when the sobbing head dropped on his bosom, and Kate —all the Kate of their first temptation—clung to him, beseeching him, "through all, through good report, ill report," not to forsake her, to let her quit Sir Philip's roof, and, protected by

his brotherly love, knowing their own innocence, defy the world!

"You must be mad to think such a position possible, Kate!" he exclaimed, shrinking in self-fear from the arms which clung to him. "What are we? are we more than mortal for such a mad fancy to find place an instant in your mind; and the world—your child—think what it would lose in a mother's blighted fame, even supposing innocence possible!"

The arms fell powerless on her knee, and the clenched hands resting thereon alone told her self-combat. Adair looked down upon her; he was almost convulsed with restrained emotions. He would fain have taken the sorrowing woman to his heart and comforted her. Of himself, he never one moment thought; had he done so, unhesitatingly, he would have saved, whilst he lost her, from the fate she so dreaded with her husband.

"Kate, you try me too severely!" he cried, springing from the sofa and crossing the room with hasty strides; "if I only consulted my anxiety about you, I never should permit you to return to him again; but I dare not—will not."

"Tell me one thing, Richard," whispered she, following, and laying a hand on his arm; "comfort me with the assurance that you do not love another; not Miss Lincoln, for I try to like that girl. I would love, not hate her to-day, for her Christian kindness towards me."

How tell her he *did* love another?

"No, Kate—no; decidedly not, I do assure you—will that comfort you?" and once again his hands clasped hers, and he spoke of her father, her son, of his own protecting affection, until the wild excitement of her manner calmed into peace.

"I have less uneasiness about my father," she said, "than about my boy; for my father would lose nothing. He accepts nothing; my acts could not injure him."

"'Tis a pity, Kate!"

"Why a pity?"

"Because it would be a tie the stronger against yourself."

"Then, too, my father has pupils now, one who comes every

day. I know this has been great assistance to him, and comfort to me, when his pride has placed a barrier over my purse. By the way," she added hastily in alarm, "the servant told me now, I remember, that the pupil was here, awaiting him. Good Heavens! can he have overheard all?"

She flew towards the inner room, and opened the door—it was, however, empty.

"Never fear," he said smilingly, following and drawing her back; "he left when I came in here; he said he should not take a lesson to-day."

At that moment Bateman opened the door of the room; he had entered the house with his latch-key.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"Ah, Kate!" exclaimed Bateman, as his daughter fondly embraced him; "What has brought you here to-day? How d'ye do, my boy?" he continued, nodding to Richard, who was endeavouring to make him an accomplice in some mystery, apart from Kate's comprehension, by all sorts of strange signs; but Bateman was not of the sphinx genus.

"I came, father, to see you sooner than you expected; I wanted to see you."

The "wanted to see you," in its meaning so comprehensive to Adair, of the poor unsupported woman, seeking extraneous strength against ill, was quite lost on the matter-of-fact Bateman.

"Were you not surprised to find Richard here, too?" he asked.

Before Adair could reply, her father said, "Oh, no! of course not; for since you have both met, naturally he has told you the truth, and when he begged me to keep it a secret from you, I

told him you would certainly meet him here some day, and then you would know who my pupil was."

All this time Adair had been endeavouring to silence Bateman; but the other, with admirable by-play, gave him to understand the folly of further mystery.

"Then he, Richard, has been your good, attentive pupil, of whom you spoke to me, in fact your principal——" she paused; "support" she would have said, but the word fell unuttered; she feared alarming her father's great delicacy.

"Pshaw! let us drop the subject, Kate," exclaimed Adair hastily; "the fact is, I grew so tired of the world and its hollow pleasures, that I sought Minerva, and growing wiser, commenced a long-threatened study, engineering, to teach which my old tutor here was fully competent, and I made him be silent to you, Katty; I am so old a man in some things, that I feared being quizzed as a great schoolboy."

He laughed, but she was very grave, not one word or hidden thought to her father was a mystery to her keener perception; she read all his generosity in self-sacrificing time and pleasures, to force the old man to receive *earned* support from him. She was very grave, a holy look came over her face as the tears rolled over her cheek, blessing the good deed and the donor. She did not utter one word, but her trembling hand clasped his, and this woman, strong in resolution and good-will before, to battle against her love for him, now felt how impossible it would be *ever* to lose or forget him.

Surely the devil, when foiled in evil ways to tempt us, filches and labours with even consecrated tools for our ruin!

It was from a scene like this, where one man, and the last she should have permitted her mind to dwell too much upon, had shone forth in colours so glorious to a generous mind, that Kate returned home; to draw the comparison between the two, her allotted master, and the one who governed her every spiritualized thought, her physical tyrant—her mental idol. She returned, to find tears and dismay in her household; in that part of it sacred to her private, holy toil of care for her boy.

Not all Sir Philip could urge had had any weight in inducing her to cast upon a hireling the charge of her unfortunate child. She made it a labour of duty at first, and that feeling had become elevated into one of so much love, that many a tear, forced to her eyelid by her husband's harshness, flowed gently back, or was dried up in the smile which reflected one beaming on her from her helpless infant. She returned. Sir Philip, driven to desperation, and the injustice which his better feelings reprehended, by the annoyances and sarcasms of the day, still more by the vindictive remembrance of Mariam's evident coincidence with his wife, thereby casting open blame on himself, had, without further consideration, brought a wet nurse to the house, one recommended by a neighbouring medical man; and Kate returned, to find her child's attendant wringing her hands in despair, knowing what her pain would be; others busily engaged packing up, and all prepared for an immediate departure for The Dyke, as if by sending away this hateful object to him, he could obliterate its existence. An hour later, and the mother would have found her child gone.

Heaven made man after its own modelling, but the world and the devil sadly disfigure him with their varnishes of many kinds; Sir Philip's had a very adhering—two in one—family pride and name. And these made an otherwise inoffensive man do demon's work.

Such was the intended separation of a mother from her crippled child. Kate stood a moment tansfixed with horror; the scene she had just come from, with its generous balm to the heart, and the one she met, with all its ignoble mire deluging the soul from whence it sprung. But one moment she stood listening to all, and then, without premeditated idea, she sprang down the stairs, and entered the library, where she understood Sir Philip was, just as he was placing his hat on his head to go out, not quite feeling at ease in the scene he foresaw when his wife should return, which he had not expected for some hours.

He visibly changed countenance when she entered, and then

forcibly assumed an easy manner, which sat ill upon the first involuntary show of emotion.

"Sir Philip," she began breathlessly; then, with one hand pressed on her heart to still its breathing, she changed her tone to one of supplication, of mother's prayer; "Philip," she resumed, "I come to ask—though certain there must be some misapprehension of the orders you gave—have you thought, or spoken of sending—but no; you could not, I am sure you could not;" and she drew near, and grasped his unwilling hand, which lay cold, without a returning pressure, in hers. "Tell me," she continued, scarcely above her breath; "you did not dream of parting me from my child—did you? You intended *both* of us to return to The Dyke. I am not well, Philip, the country air would benefit me much; I shall be ready in an hour—less, and then——"

"Stop, Lady Montgomery," he said, dropping his hand from her clasping ones, and moving back a step; "I foresaw this scene; I had hoped all would have been over before your return, for my mind is made up. That boy *and his nurse*," he accentuated the words, "leave this house at once!"

Her swelling heart dilated the fine nostril, yet still she overcame her indignation in her agony.

"But I—only I—am his nurse, dear Philip. You once were just and kind; in what have I wronged you that my child is as a curse before you?"

"You have said it, madam; it is a curse to my sight, my hearing, to all my faculties, that I—I should be father to deformity and idiotcy, for such the medical man pronounces his expectation. Surely that imp was begotten in some hour yielded up to the reign of Satan, for he has been a curse ever since his birth."

"Not to me—oh, not to me!" uttered the trembling, horror-stricken woman. "I have counted every moment blessed since he drew my breast; for as he drew the draught of life, Philip, it seemed as though he infused peace, and, with peace, heaven into my soul, often before turbulent and in revolt."

"I have no doubt you mean this for pathos," he coldly said, making an effort to pass towards the door; "but for both our sakes, since we are doomed to wear chains which we can no longer view as other than of leaden weight, we should endeavour to remove all which makes them more so. That child is my bane; once away, I may in some measure forget its existence."

"Then let it go, Philip, and me with it; we will go to The Dyke."

"No!" he thundered, his brow knitting. "Do you think I want more scandal and whispered innuendoes? Is it not enough that I know you *loved*—still love—Richard Adair, as the naming that child after him proves, without your departure from my roof? What would the world say then, but that you had fled with him? Mine, unfortunately, you are—and in you, by you, my name shall be respected!"

There was a pause; it was the woman's struggle between her policy and affections; the latter conquered.

"Then, hear *me!*" she cried. "I have been a true, and, till you forced me otherwise, affectionate wife to you—loving—no—I love, never loved but Richard Adair! I glory in my love, for he is worthy of it; and it is in comparing him with others I know the gold from the dross! I owe you this in all candour, that you may exult in your own perspicacity;" her lip curled in scorn. "Nevertheless, in respect to you, while I deemed you merited it, I would have called *your* son after you; you repudiated it, I called it Richard, and under one name united two affections, as pure as woman's ever were!"

"Pure!" he uttered, almost speechless with rage. "Are you sure—sure the imp has not been named after its own?"

"Hold!" she cried, with truthful energy, which even he could not doubt. "What I am you may unblushingly own; what I *may* be will be your work. Had I wronged you, not an hour should one roof have covered us! Ah! you will separate my child—my sinless child—from its mother; you will make a hireling press it to her purchased breast; you will make it less than the brute, which draws its dam's milk; and you will bid

me dry up nature's stream, gushing like water from a rock at Heaven's will, and sit down quietly, crossing my hands and blessing you as the agent under that high Heaven for all blessings! No, man! *It* sends blessings—*you* would pervert them; the breath in me is from above, and I use it as such should be used—to breathe my disgust!"

Before he could reply or move, the maddened, excited woman turned and fled from the room. He stood a moment to recover, not from his amazement, but to gain audacity enough and false reasoning to say,—

"It shall be as I will—I am right; only this energetic resolution can restore anything like comfort to my now wretched home!"

As he uttered this, he opened the door, and calling his confidential valet, left orders that the nurse and child within an hour should leave for The Dyke. Even before this man he had a sense of shame, and with the sophistry of an unquiet conscience said, in excuse,—

"Lady Montgomery is destroying her health with her son; the doctors have ordered his removal from her till weaned; see it quietly but expeditiously done—it is my order."

So saying, he went forth, leaving the menial the no pleasant or easy task of separating such a mother from such a child.

The man pondered a few moments; he knew his master peremptory, but then he had an hour. Thus reflecting, he went to consult the housekeeper, one not over well disposed to the young wife, mistress where she had reigned alone before Sir Philip's marriage; not that Kate ever interfered with her, but she was an upstart in this woman's eyes—rival clans; for there is, with *few* exceptions, no clanship more united against an inimical one, than the servant clique against its master!

Whilst valet and housekeeper consulted, and he drew draughts of courage from her arguments and persuasions against "the poor beggarly tutor's child, only a servant, like themselves, and not half so good, maybe," Kate dismissed all from her nursery, and then hastily wrapping her son in the large shawl she was

enveloped in on entering from her father's, opened the door cautiously, crept down the stairs, the hall-porter swung open the entrance, unnoticing the concealed burden, and mother and child went forth.

CHAPTER XL.

THE rest is a record of sorrow and weakness—of the vain struggle of a mere human nature, unassisted by the spiritual strength it had never been taught to know. A record of that perversity of vision which makes us only see present vengeance, and not future woe and retribution; or, that *certain* reward *even* here, full often, where we bear oppression and wrongs with patience—that gift divine sent to help us onward.

Kate fled to a quiet hotel, and there she sate about a couple of hours after the foregoing events, with Richard Adair, whom she had summoned to advise with her. In doing so, not one thought of harm guided her; she was too much excited to dream of aught but the safety of herself and child from the slave-curse —separation.

"Richard, tell me what I must do!" cried she, flushed and trembling; "I fear every step; I dread the entrance of that man to tear my child from me."

"Katty, dear, I cannot advise you," he answered, and the thoughtful forehead leant upon both hands, buried in the curls of his hair, his elbows resting on the table.

"I cannot go back; you would not have me do *that*, would you?" And she gazed fearfully on him, dreading he might command her to do so.

"Oh! no—no," he uttered, passing his hand convulsively through his hair, and looking up; "not that, Kate."

"I could not sacrifice my child—could I?" and the trembling

woman drew near, behind him, and both arms rested on his shoulders. "It would have killed me to have given my Richard to a hireling."

"Is *his* name Richard?" he asked, looking hastily up, and a gleam of ill-suppressed satisfaction beamed from his eyes. It was vanity—nothing more.

"Yes, I did not tell you before to-day—I thought you would blame me; but when Philip refused me *his* name, which in good feeling I asked, I almost rejoiced at his unkindness, for I was privileged to choose one—yours."

"It was unwisely done, Katty;" as he said this, his arm encircled and supported the agitated woman, leaning against his chair for support.

There was a silence—a long one, for two so circumstanced; and as he thought, and passed his disengaged hand over the heated brow, whose starting veins told the war within him, his cheek grew very pale;—it was not that he feared consequences, or calculated for himself, but for her. He felt at that supreme moment, much as he loved her, it was too sincere an affection to seek her ruin—too purely intending, and not all-sufficient, to war in this world against the wrong he might be led into inflicting upon her, a wrong he could not excuse to himself—he never thought of Heaven, or his condemnation there; his thoughts were all earthy, though conscientious, and consequently the mere world, which *alone* ever leads to error, went not out of its beaten track this time.

"Katty," he said, at length, "I can never desert you! I could not answer it to my conscience or heart. Bateman never can protect you; *here* you are entirely in Sir Philip's power, my poor girl—my poor Kate! Come, let us go. *I* will be a father to your boy; you can trust me—can you not?"

Strange, inscrutable mechanism that we are! Here was a woman who had more than once thought of, almost urged flight, with the one now beside her, and yet, when the moment for action came, she shuddered and shrank back. Truly there is an angel ever within us, fighting with darker powers which too

often drive out its patient loveliness, by their strength of evil. Kate had become a purified being since nature called all her beauties of soul into play, to protect its boon confided to her, though, in strange mockery of kindness, it made the gift a deformity, and to her a curse; but such are all things, curses or blessings, as we use them.

Her good angel pointed, weeping, to the helpless child, beseeching her to spare its already suffering body from the burden of her shame. Another spirit spoke of Richard—Richard, now hers, *if she willed it*, now and *for ever*; the love of her girlhood, who would be a father to her son—hers, only hers. Then she thought of her husband's dishonour; *hers* she overlooked. She only saw his name trailing in the dust, deformed, disgraced—oh! far beyond anything his child could have inflicted—and revenge triumphed. The angel wept, the demon rejoiced—for Adair and Kate left country, fame—all! and while Sir Philip, who, despite his words, felt full confidence in her virtue, sought her in compunction of spirit at her father's—everywhere, and finding all search in London vain, despatched messengers to The Dyke, whither he felt convinced at last she had fled, she and Adair were on their swift journey to the Continent.

Once consenting, Kate, grown desperate in her wrongs and desire of revenge, became perfectly calm, and almost happy. What was the world to her? Had she not all she loved with her? But Adair, too uncalculating, too kind-hearted to think of himself when another was at stake, felt the chill of hopes for ever destroyed—of a wrong act committed, even though done in manliness of heart, towards an oppressed woman. Until this moment he had not truly known how dear Mariam was, now for ever lost, for such he felt her; nor was he fully aware how little he really loved Kate, except as a sister. But she had thrown herself on his protection—desert her, he could not.

It would be vain to attempt portraying the surprise of all, the agony of one, when the elopement became known. Mariam's

secret, until then hidden from all but Elton, burst fort
in uncontrolled intensity, the greater that it had lain r
and concealed.

Sir Philip was the one to announce his wife's flight;
to Eaton Square, *hoping*, for his conscience was c
against him, that Kate was there, or that Mariam, w
racter he in part rightly judged, had, with a resolution
than is common to one so young, connived at the con
and knew the abode of the former. This was on t
day, when his messenger returned from The Dyke, aft
seeking Lady Montgomery there.

Sir Philip entered; he was very pale, and a restle
stood in his eye. After inquiring with an absent air a
various healths, he hurriedly asked,—

"If Lady Montgomery had been there?"

As he did so, he fixed his glance on Mariam's face, w
perfectly calm.

"Not since yesterday morning," was the reply, "
quitted together."

Not a thought of the truth had crossed his mind; he
her playing a real game of hide and seek, to alarm
briefly stated that having, by her medical man's advice
a nurse to the house to relieve Kate from the cares of
she had, in a moment of impetuosity, quitted it with
How very pathetic and just we can make all appear by
statements!

"I wish Richard were in town," said Mrs. Adair, im
"I make no doubt he could find her ladyship's abod
has gone down to some steeple-chase, I think—he me
'the country,' in his note which I have just received.'

"Have you been to Mr. Bateman's?" asked Angelina
she added ironically, "I do not suppose Lady Mo
would like the reminiscences his poor lodging might
gingham gowns and straw bonnets."

"I should imagine," hazarded Mariam, who seld
permitted Angelina's innuendoes to pass unnoticed aga

self or others, "that so excellent a daughter as Lady Montgomery has ever shown herself, would seek her father's protection before all other."

Not one shadow of the truth darkened her pure mind; but there was a fearful awakening prepared for her. The door opened as she spoke, and admitted Elton; his usually calm, sarcastic countenance was overspread with lines of conflicting emotion; he started on seeing Sir Philip, and then his glance instantaneously turned to Mariam, and an old suspicion arose against him, seeing him there—the one he had spoken of to her, that the man was capable of driving his wife to error, to break his chains. But Mariam's calmness at once proved to Elton that she, at least, was innocent of the knowledge of Adair's departure, of which he had been that morning made aware by a letter from him, written an hour before his flight. But, "What did Sir Philip there? he could not be in ignorance."

And his grave suspicions made Elton's tone more than usually severe, as he saluted him; but a few minutes elapsed before the whole truth appeared before him. The elopement was still a mystery to all. How then break it? how act? At present, he felt nothing but silence could be decided upon, and in a singularly monosyllabic temper for him, he sat listening and replying to all the conjectures about Kate's whereabouts, which made his position every moment more embarrassing on account of the being referred to by all parties, as one who ought to guess something nearer the truth than others had done. He was just preparing to go, and in absence ponder on the best thing to be done, when a servant brought in a letter for Mrs. Adair. One glance told Elton that it was not Richard's writing; and he had immediately risen to take leave when a scream burst from that lady, who had opened it, which cry electrified them all.

"It must be an invention—some vile scandal: he never could be guilty of such an act!" burst from her, as she frantically waved about the missive in her hands.

"She knows the truth," thought Elton; "so I will abide the issue;" and he laid down his hat again.

"How perfectly ridiculous you make yourself, madam!" said the dutiful Angelina, burning with curiosity.

"Read that infamy, Sir Philip," cried Mrs. Adair, handing him the letter. In vain Elton had endeavoured to attract her notice, and silence her; seeing Sir Philip's hand on the paper he knew there would infallibly be an outbreak, so he quietly drew near the one most called upon to suffer from the affair, poor Mariam. Before he had released her hand, which he had taken with a kind, affectionate pressure, a wild ejaculation burst from Sir Philip, which told all. In that moment, he forgot all he had once hoped on this very point, with regard to a future marriage with Mariam, had she loved him. He felt but the natural rage of a deceived husband, however much he deserved it, and checked the half-smothered cry of his conscience. Good-natured people often inflict as much real suffering as the badly intentioned.

The letter was from Mr. Bruce, kindly breaking the dreadful news to Mrs. Adair, and at the same time pointing out all the horrid consequences of the deed. *In this world*, like too many others, he only dreamed of the present penalty. "She must prepare for the worst," he said; "for if not shot by Sir Philip, there would be fearful damages, for from all he heard it would be found, he feared, that ever since Lady Montgomery's marriage, Mr. Adair had deliberately been working upon her mind, against an excellent, worthy husband, to make her elope."

If a man cannot lean against a whitewashed wall without carrying away proof of his locality, neither can one live with a woman whose mouth is filled with evil speaking and scandal without at last becoming tainted. Mr. Bruce was now sinking into the retailer of his wife's atrocities against every one, and when, like this, it happened to be mixed with truth, the remarks added to it too generally made a bad affair more grievous still, as now; for the idea instilled into Sir Philip's mind, that ever since his marriage, even when he had been all kindness, Kate was listening to and deliberately encouraging a

lover, washed away every kinder thought, or compunctious visiting of his conscience, and with the words which burst from him, as he started up in mad amazement, of—

"My wife eloped with Mr. Adair! dishonoured, disgraced, a mockery for months!"

The bitterest revenge rose almost to suffocation in his heart, which was doubly increased by the secret, too despairingly displayed to leave a doubt of his sincerity, which Mariam's wild cry of agony betrayed. All the girl's feelings, hitherto controlled before those around her, that which so few had guessed, lay bare to every eye.

"Richard Adair gone! Merciful Heaven, have pity on me!"

Elton had foreseen this, and had drawn near to hide her emotion if possible, and now he supported her as she fell back, powerless to stand, in her chair. She did not faint—it was worse, for she distinctly heard every uttered word around her; she heard Elton's kind tones soothing, and imploring her, in a whisper, not to give her enemies this triumph; but of hope he could not breathe—he saw none. Angelina too drew near, and all that venom could invent was lavished upon her, and under that pure garb in which so many evil things masquerade religion.

"She should learn patience, and subdue her passionate, deceitful disposition, so offensive in the sight of Heaven! for who had ever dreamed she loved Richard? She had behaved with so much duplicity, this was a just judgment upon her."

"Leave judgments to those who merit them, Angelina," said Elton, sternly; "nor dare to summon them here for this afflicted child; harbourless, they may recoil on yourself."

Mrs. Adair was wringing her hands, in streams of tears, and, all egotistical, only pitying herself.

Sir Philip stood speechless, double hate, double vengeance in his heart against Adair and his own unfortunate wife. Ideas fly with electric speed and effect through the brain in some extreme cases. His first moment's thought on the discovery of outraged rights was given to man's honour, cleansed

in blood, retributive justice; then instantaneously succeeded a cool, deliberate revenge.

An instinctive judgment of truth told him, and many things came crowding through his mind to confirm it, that Mariam could not so have loved Adair without a return; something beyond his power of guessing had separated, estranged them; but, as love and love beget reconciliation, so these two would have met, *might* meet, still. To prevent this should be his sole aim. He would let his wounded honour cicatrize of itself, and the Consistory Court should free him, free her, Kate; and then, Adair would have but one path an upright man could take—to the altar; and where then would Mariam's affection settle? This world is a strange one, of change, and exchange.

Mrs. Adair's volatile thoughts had rushed off into a stream of turbulent pathos, and were tossing about without anything like common sense to guide them. Pitching about like a ship in a storm, and her arms flung aloft like tottering masts, she was shrieking,—

"My boy—my murdered boy!—in a premature gory bed! Oh, who will give me my boy again!"

"Hush, my dear madam," said Sir Philip, with no forced smile, but one of perfect ease and calm, the quiet of a resolved man; "I do assure you, on my honour, your son has no bloodshed to fear from me! *He* has gone on the Continent, it seems; *I* shall not stir from town; I am no swordsman, a bad marksman. I grieve that our friendship, for appearance sake, must cease, but I shall bear it still in mind, believe me. Good bye, and trust in my words, I would not deceive you."

"Now, is he not a charming man?" exclaimed the weathercock-woman, as he closed the door behind him; "since Richard was tempted to do so mad a thing, what a blessing to have a man like Sir Philip! Another would have shot him, like an outlaw, without judge or jury;" and, while the placid hands wiped all traces of woe from her cheek with a laced handkerchief, an involuntary thought crossed her tranquillized mind—that simple embroidery was more in character with morning

costume than Valenciennes lace, and so she should tell Mademoiselle Fanchette, her maid.

So much for worldly mothers' ideas of morality or true sorrowing over a fallen sister!—Richard's act was the natural peccadillo of a young man, but Kate was a designing wretch!

Great Christians as we are, we cannot forget or forgive the first apple even to one another. Woman *always* is the more faulty, whatever her self-sacrifice may be; too often, one of *unselfish* affection, not vice, a distaste to give pain, by virtue's stern refusal.

CHAPTER XLI.

FEW heavily laden things fly, except Time, and so the burden be gold, his wings richly gilded, how swift his course! he outpasses all hope, sometimes.

The Consistory Court put forth all her powers. Every snail was carefully brushed away with golden brooms, and proctors and lawyers flitted about with amazing velocity, to the eyes of those who have seen the poor in their ante-chambers, awaiting the termination of some tardy trial which was to give bread,—*just* bread,—to starving mouths. We attack courts *generally*, —not men individually.

Sir Philip's gold paved the pathway liberally to liberty (as by the *law* ordained) and vengeance. Kate and Adair abode their time with what patience they might. Here again he proved the generosity of his nature; wishing in all things to spare her feelings from further pain or outrage, he withdrew from all opposition. Thus, there was no tongue to speak of her wrongs, of extenuating circumstances, of a mother's insults and despair, nor of the last act of tyranny which drove her from her home—all was silence. In vain he was urged to do so, and

thereby lessen the damages, which else would be ruinous to an already embarrassed man—no, he was deaf to all.

"Her name shall not be bandied about more than absolutely necessary," he said. "She has suffered enough, poor girl; let him release her quickly, and then I can make her the only amends in my power. I do not choose a perverted witness, some vile, paid menial, once cringing before her, to distort through their own narrow compass of vision, some of perhaps her best and purest acts and intentions, into deliberate vice and guilt; her act was one of the moment, ruinous 'tis true, but as far as such a one may be, excusable and unavoidable."

So the divorce was pronounced in the ecclesiastical court; but all that Adair had done in kindness became a channel for insult and malignity; and while he stood aloof, with his hands clenched in agony and rage, his tongue was tied—he had declined opposition.

Sir Philip came forth, pitied by all, but the few who knew her provocation, admired by all for his loving-kindness, as by counsel displayed to the world's eye; and when, riding high on the spirit of vengeance, he claimed the right of guardianship towards his son and heir, carried off by its vicious mother to wound and grieve him, ignorant justice, blinded to facts, empowered him to force it from her arms—those arms pressing it on the warm heart to which it was almost the last consolation; for she was just opening her eyes to the bitter fact, that Adair's affection was all gentleness, manly kindness, and the tenderest consideration for her feelings—but not love. He was not one to sigh because ruin stared him in the face, *that* would have bade him exert all his energies to avert it, all his cheerfulness to soothe her; but now too frequently the almost groan burst from him, and the eyebrow, that most expressive feature in the face, when mobile, would rise high in the inward suffering the man struggled to conceal.

They had remained but a short time on the Continent, and, as soon as Sir Philip's intentions were known, returned to await the result. Adair's motive in first quitting this country,

had been to facilitate a hostile meeting, so difficult in England, should the other seek it; finding that not the case, they returned to town again.

Had Kate been free from the tie her father was on her thoughts and fears, they would immediately again have quitted England; but though Bateman had been witness to Sir Philip's harshness, which had driven himself from the house, yet so little right judgment did he possess of the human heart, so little charitable pardon for its weakness, that he could find no possible excuse for his child; but we have before said, he was a thoroughly selfish man. His sufferings were mountains; another's, molehills.

However he might reprehend her frailty, a human, fatherly feeling ought to have made him see, and endeavour to withdraw her from her wrong path; but no; he would see neither, accept succour from neither, and her next bitterest pang after the certainty that Adair pitied, more than loved, was the knowledge that her fault had entailed penury on a parent, too proud to complain; he even quitted his lodging to avoid her visits, and quick retribution wrote on the very bread she ate—"Perhaps even a morsel like this your father wants!"

Worn by some fresh annoyance every day, Adair and Kate quitted town for Jersey, where they lived in the closest seclusion under a feigned name.

So much had she been wounded, and Adair himself excited by newspaper reports and paragraphs, that for a while he forbade the admission into their household of any English paper, and even his letters were received by himself at the post-office, that she might be spared the pain many of them would inevitably have given her. Thus, the world without was for him to war with, and as far as he might bring her peace, she enjoyed it.

It is a very certain fact, that the more dearly we purchase anything the more we esteem it; and daily, hourly, the affection of Kate for her helpless child grew stronger. He had driven her to be what she was; like the feather from a seraph's

wing falling in mire, her holy love had tarnished its purity in slough; but the more she felt Adair's want of passionate affection, the more closely she clung to her boy; he was so entirely her own, and, come what might, her heart whispered, "This is a love which can never fade!"

Death, even in her mind's eye, to that frail being, had ridden far away on his pale horse; it was impossible Heaven, ever merciful even to the most erring, could separate her from this. When we speak of Heaven's mercy, we too little reckon on its immensity of love, which weaning us from all through unavoidable suffering and woes, calls us to everlasting rejoicing, which here we cannot know.

The outward world, we have said, was shut out from their sight as much as possible. No paragraphs from newspapers disturbed them; she knew the divorce was hurrying to a sentence; all of law he perused, and merely told her that which was requisite for her to know; and thus a comparative peace settled around them, when she thought of the fearful past, of her husband's tyranny and injustice.

We left Mariam not even in a momentary state of forgetfulness, which would have been bliss to her, but seeing, hearing all; and oh! ten times worse, giving her imagination to the winds, which carried it in a whirlwind, whistling through the recesses of her heart, in every agonizing tone of memory.

A certain fear and respect for Elton, made Mrs. Adair submit often to acts and suggestions of his, when Angelina would have urged her to rebel against them; thus now, the latter was more than annoyed when she beheld him carry off Mariam, after soothing her to a show of resignation, accompanied by Leah, to Mrs. Wilton's, for thus Angelina lost a pleasant object, whereat to point her envenomed darts.

Mrs. Wilton had scarcely seen Mariam since her rupture with Sir Philip; she alone knew the reason, and her impatience knew no bounds, no excuse for this mad, as she deemed it, affection for Adair. With all her right judgment in most things, Mrs. Wilton had her prejudices, impossible to reason

with or overcome: her strongest was the dislike to all the Adair family, and this she carried almost far enough to become indifferent to Mariam, because she had not merely associated, from the necessity of her position, with them, but had fixed her affections on a member of the family. She even in justice argued with herself, that her feelings were unjust, that Mariam was forced to live in Eaton Square, and that the affections are involuntary,—despite all, she, woman of strong resolution, felt but blame for the desolate girl who had so naturally clung to the one who first espoused her cause, amidst the inimical tribe the fortune of war had made her prisoner to; for what else but a war between common sense and madness, had ever made Lincoln cast his child away as he had done?

Elton soothed her with every argument he was master of; but what mere words could undo what had been done? He was not sparing either in animadverting on her own conduct.

"Now," he said, "you see that candour would have been better from the first, than this foolish concealment; I told you, you loved Richard, I also assured you that he returned it; now I tell you—it is fitting you should know it, it may guide you in other things—that this false delicacy and proud susceptibility have ruined him: reckless, he has rushed into the first pitfall before him, and Heaven knows how he will extricate himself; a good, noble-hearted fellow lost, and all for the sake of a foolish girl!"

"For pity's sake, have mercy!" cried she, raising her head from Leah's bosom, and clasping her hands before her tearless, burning eyes. They were in Mrs. Adair's carriage when this conversation took place, going to Mrs. Wilton's.

"It is right you should well learn this severe lesson," he continued, in seeming harshness, though he sincerely felt for her; "it may teach you another time to be less susceptible, meeker, lowlier. Gracious powers be praised!" he ejaculated after a pause, "that I never made a fool of myself by loving any woman! They certainly are stumbling-blocks, hidden

rocks to most of us, covered with seaweed, over which we slip at every step."

"You would not have had me own an affection for Richard, which his words taught me to believe would be laughed at, would you?" she asked.

"Laughed at! Did he not say, or almost say, he loved you?"

"Yes, he did," she uttered, scarcely audible—the memory of that lost time so shook her heart; "but I thought he was deceiving me!"

"Just so, vanity again! You only thought of those words, 'that little black girl;' and what if you were an Ethiop, so he loved you? the greater would have been your triumph over those who look only to the colour of the skin, and not that of the heart, and turn in disgust from the negro face, shudder at the touch of the negro hand; whereas, to a thinking mind, it might be argued, that they perhaps are nearer God than ourselves, since his bright sun has been sent down to caress them more fondly, and, while it cast its shadow over them, made the heart patient and humble; for none, when they *truly* know their Creator, are more unobtrusively pious, more believing, than the African. But I am arguing a vain argument to one whose susceptibility alone has made her dark as night; but here we are, near Mrs. Wilton's, Mariam; if I seem harsh, it is that I have too sincere a regard for you, not to point out those faults which have given you much to reproach yourself for—you might have saved, you would not."

"May Heaven pardon me, Mr. Elton!" said the subdued girl; "I have been very selfish, very wilful; if I could save him now, at any sacrifice of pride, I would."

"Say *them*, Mariam; you have lost a poor sister. I may seem at times a heartless, cynical man; but the vanities and follies round me gall me to bitterness. From my soul I pity Lady Montgomery; her fate will be a bitter one, or I mistake much. Come," and he took her trembling hand, "nerve yourself, and let us hope that a better guide than we could

be to them, may lead to a happier termination than I now foresee."

"I thank you,—oh! most sincerely—for all you have said, Mr. Elton," she whispered, in deep affliction. "I shall learn, I trust, to be better than I am; and believe this, I would make *any* self-sacrifice now, to prevent what has occurred, even though he and I parted for ever."

"I believe you, Mariam. Well now, subdue, conquer yourself; *this* is the hardest won victory of any; and remember I am your chosen permitted adviser. I may try my power some day, perhaps."

During this conversation Leah had sat perfectly mute and motionless, except for the action of the eye, which turned from one to the other of the speakers; she seemed like one gathering every word or thought, which might serve for some hidden purpose, ever before her, and yet not perfectly matured in her mind. There is no body so immobile as the one whose mind is labouring over some hard track.

Elton declined entering Mrs. Wilton's, and Mariam, unsupported, had to bear all the unspared animadversions cast by that lady on Adair. As a true and practical Christian, she had only pity for Lady Montgomery; and, though the interview terminated eventually by a reconciliation between the aunt and niece, yet the true spirit was wanting; for if Mariam bore with perfect patience and consciousness of deserving it, all her aunt uttered against herself, she could not, even yet sufficiently blame Adair, to listen to the harsh and prejudiced terms lavished upon him, where she now felt that possibly *her* error had been parent to his guilt.

To her generous heart, one only idea was predominant; to lead this poor erring woman, Adair's companion, back to right, though this might only be done by penitence, and that hard rough road travelled over *alone*. Separation—that was the barrier to all; we might repent, but part—this indeed is the disunion of soul and body; the latter is but earth—senseless earth, without energy, still less hope; but the immortal

spirit dwells hovering still around its home, its companion, bound in sin and its sorrow, is regret; for two *never* repent in unison—one mourns over the *lost past*, the other over the risked future.

Mrs. Wilton's own good thought of right would have been, in an indifferent case, the same as Mariam's—separation—repentance—but a fear marred it. Now Adair must marry Lady Montgomery as soon as divorced; if not, she trembled at what the result might be, where busy tongues would in all probability inform him of that which till now he ignored—Mariam's attachment. Influenced by this dread, she repulsed with indignation the other's supplication, that she would seek an interview with Lady Montgomery, whose age made the step a more easy one than if she had been an older woman; and endeavour to make her understand, that, whatever her wrongs, the step she had taken was a devious one, leading only to despair. Once, this was just what Mrs. Wilton would have done; now the proposition met with a cold sarcastic refusal, which called up the warm blush on Mariam's cheek, for a purer, more unselfish thought never guided any one than hers in making this prayer.

Almost in coldness the two parted; still, the visit and Eliza's words had tranquillized Mariam; she knew she had suffering before her, and she returned home in some measure prepared, fortified, to bear it. We often make up our minds to suffering, but then something throws us out of the road we have journeyed over in mentally reckoning our amount of sorrows; and the unprepared spirit succumbs before an unforeseen trouble. For Mariam knew not half she had to bear in payment of her own faults and impetuosity.

"Missy know where Madam Montgomery?" questioned Leah, after an almost silent drive homewards.

"No, Leah dear, I do not; not in London, I think."

"Tink im know, in Eaton Square?" she again inquired after a thoughtful pause.

"Possibly they may—why do you ask, Leah?"

"Oh, for nuffin, Missy; curiosity, nuffin more."

And the black, intelligent eye fixed itself on Mariam's downcast face with an indefinable expression, yet all affection.

CHAPTER XLII.

It would almost be impossible for an indifferent person to imagine what Mariam's mental grief was. Almost without sympathy, among strangers, too frequently enduring insult, oppressed by the authority of a foolish weak woman, her guardian—a mere tool in Angelina's hands, who herself lost no opportunity of sarcastically alluding to young ladies casting their presumptuous affections away, where they were despised and rejected; and all this she bore without one rejoinder. Her silence, appearing like utter contempt to Angelina, doubly enraged her; whereas it was the almost conquered spirit submitting to all.

If this conduct may seem to some unnatural, be it remembered how Elton had impressed on her mind, that her own susceptibility and impetuosity had, in the first instance, caused the delusion of dislike towards himself in Adair's mind, and all the subsequent sorrows. It is painful enough to know we have for ever lost the one we loved, but doubly so when we can only blame ourselves, and the perversity of our besetting sins, for that loss. Mariam's spirit and heart were alike bowed to the earth; for she felt, not alone for herself, but for him, drawn as he had been into ruin; for in a letter he wrote to Elton, he said:—

"God knows, I should never have led this poor Kate astray premeditatedly; but when in her despair, fearing the separation from her child, she threw herself on my protection, what could I do? what can I do, but marry her as soon as the divorce

shall be pronounced? and, as Mariam is indifferent to me, what have I to regret in the act?"

This letter Elton showed her, and, as he did so, narrowly watched the warring of those two enemies in her mind, Patience and Despair, whose lines were written on the suffering young face, struggling to conceal its clear page. There was but one to whom her heart lay perfectly open in all its affection and regret for Adair, and fearlessly she now spoke to her; for she was well assured this faithful creature, Leah, would, even in thought, respect him whom her mistress loved so truly.

"She will thank me some day, perhaps, for her suffering now," said Elton to himself. "Poor child! with all her troubles, where would she be were I not here to inculcate the only remedies—patience and forbearance? I see little chance of happiness; but Heaven is good, and may reserve some blessing our limited intellects cannot foresee."

Mrs. Adair closed her season in town while yet there were full assemblies of the gay; her appearance in any of these would have been not alone indelicate, considering her son's escapade, but most unpleasant to herself. Your dearest friends have a talent for making you hear unpleasant home truths, the only ones you are frequently troubled with; for society too generally, sad to say, is enveloped in one large mantle of deceit and lies; its only point of unity, where every one is tearing his neighbour to pieces.

Truth once lived, though in a well, out of which she popped occasionally in her cold, dripping, comfortless nakedness. The well has long since been dried up, and the hapless goddess with it, a mere heap of dust at the bottom, which blows away before the wind from the grasp of those who essay to hold the pulverized virtue. Home truths are some of this dust, blown on our household hearts, but so sadly mixed with ashes, that, when liberally distributed, they set the teeth on edge—an indigestible creation, turning father against child, friend against friend. Never producing the shining garments of

peace, like poor Truth herself, but a two-edged sword, cutting all ties asunder.

To avoid these, Mrs. Adair quitted for the Grange, and, all things considered, our readers may imagine the family party was not the happiest in its composition and feelings, and there was nothing to relieve the monotony of its dulness, for even Narcissus was not there. By some extraordinary process of sudden mental light, he had become at last aware that Angelina might be won, if he so desired it; and so little did the desire, and the suspicion agree in pleasurable perspective, that he thought it better to keep away from her strength of mind, which awed his weakness, especially on this point.

Elton frequently joined the party, but, except to Mariam, his visits were anything but agreeable. Richard was now not only a stranger to their hearth, but almost to their lips, except when Angelina introduced it to grieve Mariam, or read some pleasant paragraph from the daily papers. Mrs. Adair had forbidden the name to be uttered before her; he had disgraced them all, ruined himself, and behaved like a villain to that excellent, exemplary man, Sir Philip Montgomery.

We will leave them all to their gloom and bitterness, and see how it fares with Adair and Kate. The former's professional adviser had written to tell him of Sir Philip's application for the guardianship of his son, at the same time giving it as his opinion, that at present the court would not accede to it, on account of the child's age. With the sanguineness of his nature, which had never permitted him to see the foreshadowing of evils, Adair shrugged his shoulders, and smiled at the other's petty system of revenge, and there the matter ended; he would not confide it to Kate—why give her an unnecessary pang, which even such a thought would be? It would have been better, as the event proved, had he done so.

We have said they were residing at Jersey, and frequently Adair strolled out alone, when domestic cares detained Kate at home—that home almost wretched alike to both; for with all his kind good-will to do otherwise, he could not cast off a gloom

pervading every moment of his existence; it was not the remorse for the life he was leading—he, man of the world, felt little of that—it was regret for her, regret for all she had relinquished, which the love he could give, never might repay.

One day he had wandered farther than usual, and when he returned, it was to find the unfortunate Kate in a state of insensibility, out of which she only awoke to rave in frenzy; her child was gone! She had been sitting in her own room, hushing the wayward cries of her son, on her bosom; the boy was not well, and she had remained at home to watch him.

As she sate thus, her attendant entered and announced a gentleman, wishing to speak to her on business. She endeavoured to excuse herself on the plea that Mr. St. George (the name Adair had taken to spare her the impertinent stare of curiosity) was from home.

"Tell Mrs. St. George," said the man, "that it is something brooking no delay, and I am about to leave the island by the packet in half an hour, and it is necessary she should be made acquainted immediately with what I have to say."

Kate arose. She could not place the child in its bed; it had just sunk to momentary quiet on her breast; so, folding a shawl carefully around it, she descended to the sitting-room. Two men were there; it was perhaps the nervousness incidental to her position, possibly presentiment, but she shuddered and half drew back; then, too, the one who had advanced towards her had a peculiarly repulsive face to one capable of reading the human countenance—a low cunning smile, all servility and fraud, seemed fixed there, a snare to entrap the unwary. What good man could accept the task of tearing a child from its mother, who had sacrificed so much for it?

"Your business, sir?" she asked, without advancing beyond the door.

"May I request a few moments' quiet conversation, madam,

on matters of moment?" was the question and rejoinder. The other man, one of coarser mould, but less ignoble manner, stood up.

"Could you not await Mr. St. George's return?" was her inquiry again. "I am unused to matters of business; indeed, I cannot understand in what I can act in any way without my husband."

"Lady Montgomery," fell from the man's lips, with his unalterably deceitful smile. Before he could add another word, she stepped back in a sudden terror towards the door, and so convulsive was her clasp, that the child gave a low sob; a look passed between the men, and the speaker advanced towards the receding and terrified Kate.

"Lady Montgomery," he resumed, "permit me to offer you a seat—you are alarmed; believe me, without cause. Our motive in coming is one to give you pleasure, I trust."

Kate had sunk on a chair, somewhat reassured, and her glances alternately fell on the speaker and her boy, as she endeavoured to still his low, pining cry.

"The fact is, Lady Montgomery, without entering further into circumstances which might pain you, Sir Philip has keenly felt the aspersion cast on his paternal feelings, by the motives ascribed to your flight."

"The motives *ascribed*, sir," she said, some of her former dignity of manner rising at the insolence of a stranger's alluding to the past; "but," she added, rising proudly, "I do wrong in bandying words with you myself; Mr. Adair will enter in a few moments, he will reply to anything you may have to say." She moved to go.

"Stop, Lady Montgomery!" he said, quickly gliding, serpent-like, between her and the door; "my business is amicable, but of necessity. I am a medical man"—he handed her a card, which she proudly waved back. "Despite all which has been most unhappily engendered in your mind by the deep grief, perhaps too rudely expressed by your husband about his unfortunate child, as heir to his title, he feels naturally

anxious every possible thing should be essayed which might benefit him."

"Sir Philip think of my boy?" cried the incredulous woman.

"It would be deceiving you, madam, to say this interest arises from anything but a personal repugnance to the idea of a deformed, helpless cripple inheriting his estates, where there exists a strong chance of cure."

"Cure!" she almost shrieked, her whole face lighting up with joy; "my boy be cured! see him walk, run, like another! Oh, sir! pardon me if I have been doubtful of the motive of your visit, but I saw only insult; pray, explain your meaning," and, seating herself, she looked up in his base countenance in confiding hope.

"I must present myself, then, Lady Montgomery, as a medical practitioner who has made all cases of deformity his sole ardent study. Sir Philip, hearing of me, consulted me. I was coming to Jersey, and though, having now but a few hours, I assured him that, on seeing the child, I could at once pronounce if a cure were possible."

"I trust it may be—I trust it may be!" she uttered, as with trembling hands she undid the frail infant's bandages, and displayed the shrunken withered limbs; one glance would have sufficed for all but a mother's hope, to carry quick conviction to the mind, that no earthly skill might ever bring them flesh or vigour.

It must be a demon in man's form who could see such a sight, and yet persist in his purpose. Kate's sweet face was bent with that love which none earthly can equal, on her child, whose little miniature countenance was the image of her own: and the two smiles crossed, speaking that angel tongue, known *only* to a mother and child.

"Positive, positive!" exclaimed he, after a careful examination; "I will stake my medical reputation that a prompt cure can be effected."

"Oh, if it may be!" uttered the woman in a tone of so much

gratitude, that the voice was almost powerless to express all she felt.

"Of course you would like to retain the child yourself?" he asked.

"Oh, yes—yes! God knows I have suffered, sacrificed enough to do so!"

The last words were inaudible.

"I believe, too, this is Sir Philip's wish, I do assure your ladyship. I may be pardoned, I trust, for alluding to a painful subject, that only the kindest feelings exist on your husband's part towards you; though unfortunate circumstances have obliged him to take desperate steps."

"I am indeed glad to hear so, sir, I wish——" she stopped suddenly, and the wish was mentally completed—"that I had known this, been less impetuous, and now, not what I am!"

There was a dearer love in her heart than the one for Adair, and that she had brought shame upon.

The man hesitated—he seemed at a loss how to proceed; the other had not uttered a word, but he looked at Kate, and thought it was hard enough, through the necessity of his position, to do what he had to aid in, without the bitter deceit and fraud on his conscience, which the other, by his quick glances of exultation, seemed to delight in.

"You have, I presume, used some bandages or mechanism for your child?" asked the spokesman quickly, as if his momentary wit had at last been restored. "Could I see them? for this is a mere visit on which I shall report, and when I return next week, for no time must be lost, bring such as *I* employ."

"Yes, I have several; I tried everything I could dream of," she answered. "I will send for them."

"I am much hurried," he replied, "for the steamer leaves almost immediately; if——"

She read his thought. "I will go myself, I know exactly where they are."

Adair and Kate were living with strict economy; she alone nursed and attended on her child. So full was her heart of

hope for him, gratitude towards Sir Philip, that there was no room for suspicion. Advancing towards the sofa, she gently laid down her boy on a pillow, and with a caution to the supposed doctor to watch him, quitted the room.

As she searched everywhere, something resembling a smothered cry reached her. She paused and listened, then the hall-door closed. "'Tis Richard," she thought, and, going to the staircase, gently called him: all was still. Some moments more elapsed in her search, and then she ran downstairs into the parlour—it was empty, One instant was given to doubt—doubt of her waking—her sanity; and then fell the bolt on her heart, the reality which leads to madness—her child was gone!

CHAPTER XLIII.

There is one crime in the world, to us incomprehensible—Infanticide. Still it exists, and is one of the commonest, most lightly punished. As some might read this in whom it probably would find extenuating circumstances, and as to such a mother's madness over her ravished child would seem dry, uninteresting details, we will lightly pass over Kate's awakening, and her inconsolable sorrow; moreover, we never could hope to paint a mother's despair, a mother's power of love, like that so beautifully and vividly portrayed in a recent popular work, where the bleeding feet cling to the rotten ice in the bounding flight, like a mountain-cat guarding her young.

To those who have felt all the beauty of that gem of pathos, as we have, we leave the imagination to portray to them Kate in her madness; even on Adair she would not look, when he avowed a knowledge that Sir Philip had applied for his son's guardianship. Not all his assurance that he had concealed this from a kind motive towards her, could remove the impres-

sion that a motive of jealousy, arising from her great love for her child, had actuated him; thus making him a party to the base deed in thought, if not in act. There could not remain a doubt of where the boy had been taken; for on the table lay a note from Sir Philip's solicitor, informing her of the judgment and sentence of the court relative to the guardianship.

To remain in Jersey was impossible; indeed now, Adair resolved, if not too late, strenuously to oppose Sir Philip—deny their guilt, he could not. But he no longer would permit all her wrongs to be made so many crimes against herself; he felt, too late, that a mistaken kindness towards her had urged him to bear, forbear, and not vindicate.

Kate was no longer the woman we have hitherto seen her; all peace was gone—nothing remained but the desperation of regret. Her very nature seemed no more the same; a cold *hauteur* had taken place of that gentle lovingness we have hitherto seen; restless, wild, frantic, nothing appeared to touch or interest her; her father she never thought of; and if Adair, to call back her wandering spirit to reason and common sense, spoke of him, an impatient gesture or word was the sole result.

All his efforts on their return to discover the abode of her child were unavailing, and, worn in spirit by the constant view of her agony, and the destruction of all hope around himself, he rushed on madly into the society of those ever ready to go hand in hand with a man gambling and betting to destruction.

One day Kate sat rocking herself to and fro like a person almost childish from grief, and with every undulation of her body she recalled to her mind, that thus she had been wont to hush her boy to his gentle sleep. A rap at the door of the apartment startled her, and at the same moment her servant entering announced,—

"A person, a woman of colour, wishing to speak to her."

"I can see no one—leave me," was the abrupt answer. The door closed, but a moment afterwards re-opened, and the girl again entered.

"If you please, my lady," she whispered, "the person says

she is Leah, Miss Lincoln's maid, and she has something to tell you, you will be pleased to hear; it is about your chil——"

The word was not pronounced when Kate was at the door, her wild excited countenance that of a maniac; the chord of existence was at play, and the almost sinking woman had started to life.

"Where is she?" she cried, "bring her to me—has she—has she——" the sentence died on her lips, as she supported herself from falling against the open door, and, though almost insensible, still the hand essayed to wave forward Leah, standing in the passage.

Supported by the two, she moved back to the room she had just quitted, and gradually the mist cleared away from before her sight and memory, and she grasped Leah's arm.

Over her thoughts, like a shield against deception in this woman, came the recollection of Mariam's kindness on more than one recent occasion, and she looked up with confidence on the messenger sent, as she supposed, by her. Over Leah's face passed so many emotions, that the mind vainly strove to distinctly trace one, the black eye, rolling in its ocean of white unquiet waters, like a storm-driven vessel, bespoke so much at variance with good-will, that any one more lucid in her ideas than poor Kate would have suspected and dreaded her.

Whatever was in her mind on entering, as she leaned over Kate's pale, worn, young face, her own softened in its expression; a more human feeling seemed to pervade her senses, and the dogged, intense one of animal ferocity and revenge, gradually gave place to one of almost gentleness and pity; Kate looked so utterly helpless in her misery. We can with something of calm note the ravages of care in the old: all are born to suffer, and why then wonder if the common lot has found the pen of time to write it? But it is different when the young face has its heavy cloud cast over it—the mist which dims the eye, pales the thin cheek, and streaks the locks with premature white; this it is, which makes the heart ache; for we think and reckon

the weary years which nature may destine that young form, to carry its load of more than mortal pain.

"Now, what have you to tell me?" whispered Lady Montgomery, scarcely above her weak breathing,—"speak quickly."

Leah looked at the attendant—"She leave the room," she answered, pointing to the servant, "and Leah tell all to Missy Mumgomery."

"Now!" cried Kate, anxiously, when they were alone, endeavouring to rise from her chair, but the trembling limbs betrayed her, and she fell back.

"Missy berry weak," said Leah, placing an arm around her, and yet it was done with hesitation; she had learned a sad lesson in Christian England, that many, and those boasting refinement of mind, shrink from contact with the skin darkened by the sun —a dark surface, over many a noble heart. Kate felt nothing of this defiling prejudice; and her aching, bewildered head leaned for support against the dark, heaving bosom. Over Leah's face passed something so refining, so pure, that the really plain visage became momentarily beautiful.

In her strong, vigorous arm, she raised Kate's frail, shrunken figure from the chair, and, carrying her to the couch, laid her there, as if it were some poor infant, and then, still supporting her head with one arm, she sunk gradually on her knees beside her, and the eye was moistened with that tear of grateful admiration for another's generosity, which we should not shed even perhaps for personal wrongs.

"Listen, Missy Mumgomery," she whispered, breathing quickly, with her mouth close to Kate's face; "listen well;—Leah berry bad woman, revengeful, cruel; Leah not know nuffin good but 'im lub for Missy Linkum; Leah see poor young missy day by day, fret, fret, fret, and seem goin' for to die."

"But, my child—my child!" exclaimed Kate, impatiently endeavouring to rise.

"Stop!" said the other, gently restraining her, "'im come to dat, presently; de oder fust. Leah tell Missy Mumgomery sometink, and missy nebber must tell it again—she promise?"

Kate bowed her head, she had no force to speak; all her strength was in her power of listening about her child.

"Missy Linkum die for lub of Massa Adair; Leah see her fadin'; fadin' away, like de lotus of her own big ribber in Ingy, when it drawn out of water, a little hour after; well, Leah swear to revenge it all on de one who done it, on——"

"Not on me!" uttered Kate, in terror, as she strove to rise. "Not on me, for what would become of my boy without me?" For a moment she forgot he was lost to her.

"Leah come for dat," continued the woman, still detaining her; "Leah know but one way of reaching Missy Mumgomery, through her child—Missy Linkum speak of all her lub for dat poor boy."

"God only knows all!" uttered the poor, broken-hearted mother.

Leah continued—"De boy stolen, Leah quiet, quiet, make all quieries eberywhere; Sir Philip not neber suspec she, and den he like to hear of Missy Linkum; he tink missy marry 'im when 'im free, so Leah go to de house and talk, and keep 'im eyes open, and one day find out where de boy!"

It would be impossible to render the dramatic nature of this Indian woman's tone and manner as she uttered this. The eyeballs distended and glowed like fire; for, as she spoke of it, she thought, for an instant *only*, of the revenge she had held at command the day she learnt this. Kate was speechless with terror as those eyes glared on her; she shrank back, and sobbed hysterically in mere physical terror.

Leah perceived the effect her manner had produced; it even quelled a mother's anxiety about her child. In an instant, by a self-command almost miraculous, Leah became calm, and whispering again, "Missy no fear now," she said, gently drawing Kate on her bosom "Leah came here to tell all dis, but not as she now come—she came to be revenged, no matter how; but Leah not bad all, only people make her a reproach, cause Gor Amighty paint her blacker nor day. She come, Missy Mumgomery not shrink away from her as oders do, all but dear

Missy Linkum—Leah tank Missy Mumgomery for dat; den poor missy look so ill and changed, not de booful white creatur Leah first see, and so de black girl's black heart grow white—oh! all ober white—and she pity, pity Miss Mumgomery;" and in proof, one heavy tear, pure and clear as ever European Christian shed, dropped in mute evidence on Kate's hand. "And now she will ask Missy Mumgomery sometink; missy swear—swear by what she loves best in dis world—to leave Massa Adair, to take de heaby sorrow off Missy Mariam's heart, and Leah bring back de boy!"

"I swear it!" shrieked Kate, springing, with the energy which hope will ever bring the dying, to her feet, and clasping her hands in attestation before heaven. "Give me back my boy, and I will leave all but him; give him to me, and I will pray for you at night, when there is no sound to intercept our cry to Heaven, and by day, when everything beautiful in creation forces us to thank, and pray; give me back my boy!"

And the sobbing mother dropped on her knees at the feet of the woman, who seemed Heaven-sent to her, and raised her streaming eyes to the other's face; and when the pale lips were unable from emotion to articulate, their quivering syllabled the words of earnest entreaty.

"Remember," said Leah, solemnly, as she raised and placed her on the sofa, "dat if missy break him word, berry bad tings will come to pass, and de boy be lost for eber to she!"

"I do repent me already of my fault—my impetuous fault!" ejaculated Kate, looking up to Heaven, and more addressing the Spirit there than the kneeling woman before her; "and just Heaven knows it was fate, not vice, which made me commit it; and I did it, too, to save that which is lost me!"

"Not lost, missy, Leah promise; for she believe poor missy's word, dat de boy shall be in her arms before to-morrow night, and den Leah make two smile again, missy here, and poor dear Missy Linkum, whose heart berry sad now; but de boy must not stay here, else Sir Philip steal him again."

"I will fly with him—fly, Leah, my good Leah—where no law may part us, and——"

"Alone—mind!" interrupted the other, fixing her keen, searching glance on Kate's face; "for, if not, no place will conceal Missy Mumgomery from Leah!"

"Trust me—oh, trust me! Even were I not sick in my own heart of my fault, a superstitious fear would withhold me from again so erring."

Leah refused to enter into any particulars with Kate; but there was so much sincerity about her manner, that not a doubt crept into her listener's mind that she was speaking any thing but truth.

CHAPTER XLIV.

LATE on the following evening, when the mail-train from London arrived in Dover, from it descended Kate, closely enveloped in a large cloak, though the August evenings were still warm and seasonable: she was accompanied by Adair and an attendant. Without entering any hotel, they immediately proceeded on board the mail-packet, lying off till the arrival of the train.

Scarcely a word passed her lips, but the eye wandered wildly towards every one approaching them, as though fearing some hand upon her arm, strong in might to detain her. Occasionally a sentence fell from her lips, trembling and whispered, as "Let us hasten, Richard," as though wind, tide, and train all should obey the impatient spirit. At last they were under weigh, and Adair anxiously implored her to go below, and not brave the air, keen and chilly, at that hour, on the water. An impatient negative was all he could obtain from her; and there

she sat, watching with straining eyes the receding cliffs, white in the dark night, afar off, and, when they could be no longer seen, the figure but changed its posture, and she watched through mist and spray for the land of her hope, that land which our impatience bounds to reach, and where already perchance a grave is yawning to receive us. Every noise which seemed unusual on board that packet—the coiling of a rope, the hurried tread, a splash in the wave—made her start erect in terror, a terror which froze the pale cheek paler; she fancied it some boat bearing after them, a messenger in the law's name, to force her to restitution of the loving burden she held tightly clasped on her bosom.

"Kate, Kate—pray be tranquil; there is nothing to fear, I assure you. Leah said it would not be missed in town for hours; you will betray yourself."

She made no reply, but sunk on her seat with a wild, haggard look.

Three hours passed, and then the town of Calais stood before them; their flight had been accomplished in safety, and, more dead than alive, Adair lifted her out of the steamer; and yet the heart beat stronger than the frail pulse, and tears of rejoicing rolled down her cheeks, as he, tenderly as a woman, drew her towards a fire which had been kindled to restore circulation to the blood, frozen more with terror than cold; and then, as the heavy cloak fell from her shoulders, her poor child, for which she had so much suffered and sacrificed, was exposed to view, and it was alone in seeing this frail creature that all the purity and immensity of a mother's love might be fathomed—that ocean of love, concealing so much riches, so many pure gems, beneath turbulent waters and racking storms.

Not all her care, continuously given, would long have preserved the life so faintly now whispering in its mould of clay; but, torn as it had been from her, given to a hireling, who had not learned, in watching every breath, to comprehend the speech, yet incomprehensible save to a mother, and thus its many cries, many wants, had passed unnoticed, until, wanting these, life

had expended itself in plaints, to still which she woul passed nights in watchfulness. Poor boy! he coul pining, tell her there was one nearer than herself to Death; for she but held his frail body, and the oth grasped his heart, which not even her warm love could q to life. But there are things we will not see for those we death is one.

Leah, as we have shown, spoke truly; until she beheld misery, but two feelings pervaded her heart—love towar mistress, Mariam; and from that sprung the other—a res by any means to revenge her sufferings on Kate. We do not way attempt to excuse this most fearful, most entrancing p —but we *do* excuse the woman, for she was a child of natu our mere human nature is but animal, after all; and as t will fly at the throat of those who wound him, so will a checked nature seek revenge. For this gift of humanity birth demands two things—to have the evil overcome, li crackling thorns we cast into the fire, and the good seed vated, until it becomes a flourishing tree, in the branc which bright generous thoughts, like rejoicing birds, co rest.

Leah has told how she obtained a footing at Sir Philip's most gladly awarded her. She had thrown herself in his and he, ever anxious to gain all information relative to Ma the sole object of his thought, and future hopes when fre into the snare; and while she wandered about the hou town, an object of mockery and surprise, looked upon as a witted creature by the menial gang generally infesting men's houses, she was, with the proverbial cunning of the n Indian generally, of low caste, serpent-like, making her hidden and in silence. Her first intention was, through lost child, to secure a certain revenge on Kate, and Richard.

The means she had not all digested, they were but cri imagined; but happily a better spirit awoke within and she repented before the deed was done. Truly it is so,

there are spirits ever about us, good and evil, and this or mortality they bow to, not for ever to be waking.

Oh! if we could but reason thus, and when assailed by some demon keep him at bay till our guardian spirit rose strong from its slumbers, how much, much sorrow should we spare ourselves and others!

For what is more wakeful, alas! than sin? ever on the alert in dreams, in thoughts. The haunting nightmare of that rest we court to avoid temptation; coming stealthily on, no hasty, ungentle step, to alarm us, but moving forward smiling; a mirror in the extended hand, in which we see the far away hills of pleasantness and peace. We grasp the extended hand, the mirror reverses, and beyond we but see despair and desolation! The once winning smile becomes worn and haggard; the hills indeed are there, but rugged and barren, and up these we must toil in penitence and woe, whilst over their summit are fleeing all our happy, innocent thoughts and dreams, which we vainly raise up our voices to call back to their forsaken home—our breast.

Leah had obtained permission from Mariam to absent herself from the Grange, and return to town on a pretended excuse, which seemed plausible to the other; and thus, without exciting a suspicion of herself, the wily woman discovered where Lady Montgomery's unfortunate child was, and, without herself appearing in it, had it carried off from the farmhouse, some distance from town, whither Sir Philip had placed it at nurse.

Her good spirit had indeed stood by her during her interview with Kate, and when she placed the restored child in its mother's arms, she could not exact the first demand, "that Kate should go *alone*;" she relied on the promise given, that they should part, and, satisfied in her own strength to do all ill if Kate deceived her, she quitted with the consolation of heart we all feel, when led from a bad to a worthy action.

* * * * *

"Heaven knows, Kate, I would not keep you longer in error

could I avoid it," said Adair, the day following their arrival in Calais, as he urged her to place a greater distance than they already had done between Sir Philip and her sole thought, the boy. "But though he cannot, I hope, here, call in the law to force the child from you, still it would be well to leave nothing undone, the omission of which might afterwards be a reproach to us."

"Hear me, Richard," she said, looking up from the sickly burden on her knee, but though sadly, with a calm resolute voice; "it will seem as a mockery to you that *I* should speak of virtue, or the yearning regret for that which will never be mine again—peace of mind; that peace which made all my toil and poverty once, things to forget on my pillow at night, and to rise with a garment of hope on the morrow; so I will say nothing of this myself but as a superstitious fear. We must part!"

"Part, Kate! and in Heaven's name what will become of you?"

What a dull thing reality is, and especially when allied to error! The childish words of innocence become silliness, the pet names of warranted affection, mockeries, or *oubliettes:* Adair never called her Katty now.

"I can exert myself, as I once used to do for my father; and oh, doubly so now! for this poor, weakly child is more to me than ever he was. And then you know Sir Philip cannot in law cast me penniless on the world; for myself I would reject with scorn anything from him; but we forget self and pride—all for the sake of those we love."

"But Kate—dear Kate—I cannot forsake you; have I not brought you to shame, and where it not a greater one there to leave you?"

"You allude to marriage? Hear me, dear Richard—dear, ever dear—too much so for me to condemn you to unhappiness: *you do not love me*, not as you should love, to make all sacrifice seem light; I *never* shall become your wife, and do not seek to know all my reasons, for they are sacred by a promise given, but we must part."

Man is a wilful animal, liking ever to do of his own accord, never to be coerced. Kate had truly judged the extent of his affection, but, as a friend or brother, he had been looking forward to his marriage with her as to an event the most painfully hopeless to himself; and yet one to which he was in honour bound, even though positively not having urged, or wished her to take the step which ruined both. Yet, with all these feelings, he felt beyond expression surprised and wounded to think that she *could* leave him. Oh, man! and oh! our self-esteem.

"I will tell you thus far, Richard," she continued, in reply to his exclamation of grief and surprise that she should dream of separation, now that a short time would cement their affection by a stronger and legal bond; "I am bound in gratitude to leave you, and equally bound not to reveal beyond this; and far more than even this, I have a purer, better reason. In my impetuous flight to save my boy, I overlooked the fearful stain in which I was imbruing him; I may never efface it, but deeper, darker, it shall not be made by me. No tie of marriage can obliterate it—separation, reparation, as far as possible, may. I never till now learned what virtue truly was; God help and pardon my sin of ignorance; and yet I sometimes find comfort in thinking, that had I not sinned, and so deeply repented, I should still be ignorant of Heaven's immense mercy towards repentance, and the rejoicing over us of its glorious band of spirits!"

That day they parted homes; all she would consent to receive was, the smallest sum possible to support herself and her suffering dying child; and, so self-deceiving is the human heart, that perhaps one of Richard's severest trials was, to lose the support this girl's love was to him, in the now alienation from all. Yet it was kindly done; and if at that moment he had been capable of judging such faults as the one he had committed rightly, and not with the eyes of the man of the world, who does not even reckon them venial, her resolute withdrawal from sin, her patient acceptance of any suffering which might be awarded in payment of it, would have been the only perfect

and straight road to his heart's conviction of error, t
have been found.

One good practical lesson is worth all the sern
preached; it is a mental cat-o'-nine-tails which cut
heart, leaving its zebra marks behind it.

Nothing, however, could persuade him to leave he
her sorrowful watchings over a flickering life.

Day by day the lamp grew fainter, more dim, as t
blood paled to water, thus insensibly unmarked to rip
Still she would not see it thus; and the little voic
thin to reach her ear almost in the low pining cry, it
ing reply to death's "Come away," was joyfully not
as proof that his sufferings were less, and the mo
brightened, while reason looked on and sighed over
ness.

But there came a day when the thin voice ceased,
no longer essayed to clasp her neck, and those eye
than infant sense—for they had borrowed their
from her intense gaze and love—were fixed upwar
her face, but there was a glare as of glass over them.

Richard had sat beside her for hours soothing, c
speaking reason, where it found no heart to comp
for it fell with a dull, death-like sound on a mothe
was the "dust to dust," on a beloved one's coffin.
the glare in those strained eyes, and, gently pres
their lids, he shut them from her gaze for ever.

A shudder passed through her frame, then a shiv
and as he gently endeavoured to take the dead child
arms, she shrieked in wild excitement, and sprang
cold burden to the farther end of the apartment,
weeping voice found words to pray and supplicat
represented to her mind both, the One to give, th
take life—grim death.

Let moralists preach *stern* duty; there is as ex
just a one in comforting the weak and erring wo
shielding her from despair's possible consequences,

drawing from all contact with her. He felt nothing of this; but when her senses returned, and her bowed, breaking spirit owned the just retribution, still she could not drive him from her,—parted they were in sin, but in her sorrow he more than shared it, nor sought to lead her back to the fault even he began to look upon with awe, as having had Heaven's hand in judgment raised against it; for that which made her err, was taken from her.

CHAPTER XLV.

We have shown how Leah, unsuspected, obtained possession of Sir Phillip's child; to accomplish this, and obtain an entry into his town residence, it needed deep cunning, much plotting. When we commence such things, we do not always calculate or remember, that not an act of ours will fail to be weighed in a balance for good or ill, reckoning for or against us; neither can we always foresee that what is necessary for one scheme may militate against another one dear to us.

To obtain Sir Philip's confidence it needed an excuse; and not foreseeing any annoyance to her mistress, whom she would have died to serve, she let fall oblique hints of regret, possibly not unshared by Mariam, for the past. This made her sought for by him, to whom she had presented herself on a trivial, but plausible excuse, and, in consequence of the train she lighted, the theft of his son passed almost unnoticed in the absorbing anxiety to have his divorce passed as quickly as possible; and just before the dogs and Mantons were starting for the north for grouse-shooting, Sir Philip Montgomery's divorce passed the House, and he almost immediately quitted town to visit an old friend residing near the Grange. Much seemed to favour his project. Adair was of necessity absent,

and the heavy damages awarded Sir Philip made his ret
seem impossible; but to all, his marriage with Lady M
gomery was looked upon as an act, if not accomplished, bey
a doubt of early occurrence.

Poor Adair! though much to blame, surely no man had l
more completely thrown into unsought error and difficul
than he had; for his unfortunate argument to Kate in fa
of wrong, uttered in thoughtlessness, not premeditated g
did not deserve the punishment which had fallen upon him;
how have cast from him one so wretched, so unprotected
Kate, when she appealed to him?

It never entered for an instant into Mariam's mind,
innately delicate, that any sister woman could, under
circumstances of the affection she was known to possess
Adair, for a moment harbour the idea of uniting her to
Philip now. Great then was her horror when, one day aft
round of country visits, Mrs. Adair and Angelina both for
agreed that there was no possible reason why the much-injur
husband of Kate Bateman should be excluded from their ho

They had met him at a neighbour's, and, as they consid
would be of necessity doing so in town, it would be absu
prudish, *arrièrée*, countrified, to cut him; and so it was se
in all *delicacy*, that the only one worthy of so sharp a pre
ing was Richard Adair, for he had disgraced them. C
quently, Sir Philip gained his object; and, while all be
his ex-wife now espoused to another, he was once again fo
ing an *ignis fatuus* in Mariam, whose very soul revolted a
him in utter disgust, which she took no care to conceal.
none suffered more keenly in all this than poor Leah, believ
as she did, that Kate had so bitterly deceived her, and,
wife of Adair, had flung all promises, however solemnly g
to the winds.

The papers duly announced the death of Sir Philip's s
the doubly-rejoicing father put on mourning, and the glad
countenance spoke the relief this death was to him;
passions were gratified at once—this object of his hatred

reproach was removed, and he alone knew truly how keen the avenging blow would fall on the wretched, bereft mother.

Whilst meetings with Sir Philip were only the result of visitings at neighbours' houses, Mariam resolved to avoid them by not quitting home, and this was the commencement of her country annoyances—she who had hoped for peace there. But she had an indefatigable enemy ever watching to wound her—Angelina; and poor, weak Mrs. Adair, led as she ever was, fell readily into the snare both were preparing before her (Sir Philip and Angelina), and, to Mariam's horror, she one day saw him enter the drawing-room at the Grange, on those terms of friendship which fashion might permit, but delicacy, under existing circumstances, forbade.

In an instant all this man had dared to insinuate to her, one night before Kate's elopement, rushed to her mind, and her true woman's heart bled anew for the poor creature, even though her own rival, who had assuredly been driven to the step she had taken, and possibly for the object which now made him a visitor at the Grange. As he entered, Mariam rose hastily, with that innate dignity of a fine mind insulted by contact with depravity, scarcely returning his bow, and, perfectly blind to the proffered hand, quitted the room.

Sir Philip bit his lip; but he had done too much not to suffer more, sooner than now retire without a hard struggle to win. He knew women in general are strange animals, and that their actions should never be decidedly reckoned upon as indexes of their intentions. A true woman is a mental reservation incarnate, not positively untruthful, but composed of many biases which require careful stitching and patching together, like our grandmother's quilts, to make a good, comfortable, compact whole. But Mariam was truth itself—unpolished, undisguised truth—too candid to take one crooked path for the attainment of anything; moreover, the once shy, strange girl, the timid gazelle, brought from its Indian wilds, was beginning to look around, and care for its own safety.

A warm debate followed this proceeding of hers, in quitting

the room, to which she listened with a calm decision of manner, beyond measure galling to the mover of everything against her, Angelina, who could scarcely restrain her envy within decent bounds; to see this girl, whom she had sought every way of humbling, coolly rejecting him, whom she, Miss Adair, would gladly have accepted; perhaps, the bitterest of all had been Mariam's rejection of Narcissus Browne, for it had required long arguments with herself to gain her own consent to what, even with her evangelical dispositions, she regarded as a *mésalliance*.

Seeing Mariam's dislike to marriage, even knowing it now to arise from affection for her own brother, she urged her weak mother to enforce the clause of the will, obliging the girl to choose a husband, or forfeit her property, by a certain time, of which there remained little now. We have seen that even with Narcissus she would have promoted the marriage, grieving her own heart to wound another. Oh! there is nothing so active and unsleeping as one woman's jealousy of another! They dream new-born babes of revenge at night, and nurse and cherish them all day. Mariam resolutely, positively refused to remain *en partie de famille* with Sir Philip, where all his obnoxious attentions were directed towards herself, and where no rebuff of hers could in any way repulse them.

Seeing she sought her room whenever he called, Angelina invented another plan whereby he might become a visitor *in* the house, and thus drive her from her retreat. She made her mother invite Mr. and Mrs. Bruce from town, and Narcissus, thus making Sir Philip's residence not to be remarked among others—quite blinding her poor milk-and-water mother to the gross indelicacy of his residence among them, on any excuse. His visit having terminated in the neighbourhood, he removed most gladly to the Grange; and then came the Bruces and Narcissus.

Still Angelina bit her lip, for Mariam, with perfect composure, took her place in the drawing-room, and as completely ignored Sir Philip's presence by deafness whenever he addressed

her, as if he had not existed: her conduct was a reproach to both her guardian and Angelina, and so severe a one, that it was as a drawn battle between them.

It was only in her chamber that the poor, tired heart gave way—not in impatience; she had gained immortality's greatest victory over her mortal nature. Not an impatient, complaining word fell from her—she wept and suffered in almost silence; and the dark, agonized face of Leah leaned over her, working in its own regret for vengeance, delayed through pity then, where she *now* could not command it, as none knew where Adair and Kate were, and these she felt were the authors of Mariam's deep affliction.

When words of wrath burst from her, "Hush!" Mariam would say, though almost choking with those tears nature sent involuntarily forth, "Let us be patient, Leah, and hopeful, for we are but fools when we strive to work against a wiser power. Forgive me, oh, my God! but I am weak and frail, whilst I strive to guide others, and my very tears are witnesses against me in my unwillingness to bear the lot awarded me. I will hope, knowing that everything is for the best."

* * * * *

Our *dear* friends—Mr. and Mrs. Bruce—sat alone in the deserted breakfast-parlour, a few days after their arrival at the Grange; they looked very snug, for we have forewarned our readers, by many hints, that he was no longer the disagreeable person in his wife's eyes that he once was; in honour to the sex we must say, that a woman *resolved to do*, in nine cases out of ten, succeeds.

Mrs. Bruce had made her husband quite an agreeable companion; she had withdrawn him from the society of such fellows as Elton, who ruin a man for anything docile, putting all sorts of ridiculous notions of the dignity of man in his head, as incompatible with tale-bearing and scandal. Bruce now, though he sometimes peeped through his old mirror, and saw ancient thoughts and ancient impressions of things, soon found it snatched away by his *certainly* better half—she was a good

three-quarters of him—and in the part she self-appropriated, a good lump of his heart had passed.

One only principle of primitiveness which he retained was, that he was the most *literal* man in the world.

"I declare, Bruce," whispered she, drawing her chair close to his, "I am perfectly disgusted with the indelicacy of all the proceedings here! Could anything be more so, than inviting *that* Sir Philip? I declare I feel quite compromised by remaining here!"

"So I have been reflecting, my love," said the pensive man, reckoning the flowers in a square of carpet; "let us go away again."

"Go away!" she exclaimed in surprise. "You really *are* very stupid, Bruce, and devoid of generous feeling, in many cases! What, would you have me desert poor dear Mrs. Adair, whom I have known so many years; leave her unguided among so many enemies? No, Bruce, I see you are not yet acquainted with the generous devotion of your wife. From my heart's inmost core I pity her; it is others I blame—that Angelina, and that vile, obstinate Miss Lincoln. Why cannot she marry Mr. Browne? if she had any delicacy she would marry any one, sooner than let every one see she's dying about young Adair."

"I wonder where they are," suggested he.

"I wish, my dear," she responded, tartly, "you would leave off that habit you have of *wondering* about everything. I'm sure *I* wonder at nothing, and you never answer any suggestion of mine, but rush off *wondering* directly."

"I didn't mean any harm, lovee," said the penitent man; "I thought my remark quite relevant to your subject."

"By the way," exclaimed the consistent woman, "I should not wonder if, as a climax to their indelicate conduct, young Adair and the ex-Lady Montgomery were to come; of course they are married by this!"

"You say 'they,' my dear," responded the literal one; "I thought you excluded Mrs. Adair from more than weak leading."

"Well, I said 'they,'—I meant Angelina; and bless me, Bruce, how very stupid you are!"

"Poor little Kate" fell from the impervious man, taking a peep through lang syne's glass, "I should like to see her again, and happy too; she never was with Sir Philip; I hate that cold-blooded man!"

It is impossible to say where the hot blood, which rushed to his wife's face, might have boiled over, had not the door opened, and Mariam slid in; she stopped suddenly, having crept for quiet hither, believing all in another apartment.

"My dearest Miss Lincoln," cried Mrs. Bruce, rising hastily and seizing her hand, as she drew her to an unwilling seat, "I am delighted to see you a moment alone; forgive my abruptly speaking on a subject near my heart. I have seen with deep pain, that—surrounded as you are by enemies, and those who, to their shame be it said, instead of guarding, persecute you—you fear all, even me, who would do anything to alleviate your early sorrows, my poor child,"

As she uttered this motherly phrase, Mrs. Bruce pressed the hand still retained a prisoner in her own. Mariam said nothing, but, as Byron wrote, she fixed her open eyes on the sentimental speaker in discreet surprise, for she well read the other's character.

Bruce himself was speechless, and staring.

"Poor child!" continued his wife, "listen to me. I know your thorough good, strong sense will teach you discretion and secresy; were I you, I would appeal to a justice you will never meet here, and let the laws of England, so gloriously unprejudiced and just in all cases, decide between a foolish father's will, and——"

"Hush! madam," interrupted Mariam, coldly withdrawing her hand and rising; "I can permit no one to question my my dear father's right to do with me as seemed best to his view. If you please, we will drop the subject; I came here seeking some one, pardon my interrupting your *tête-à-tête*." Before another word could be spoken, she quitted the room.

"I always told you what that girl was!" cried th woman; "so much for being good-natured, and tryin any one!"

"I never shall understand you, my dear," uttered heartened husband; "I really thought you disliked an Miss Lincoln!"

Any retort was prevented by the entrance of Mrs. A Angelina, and the worthy quartette sat down, and beg ing as much mischief as possible,—for what the malice left undone, the weakness of others perfected. Lo family matters discussed in this friendly circle; and M finally decided, by their united persuasions and advice, upon Mariam's immediate acceptance of some one, as means of restoring the house to that quiet state it kne she became its inmate. They were in warm debate wh sounded in the hall, a servant flung open the door, and man on earth they any of them wished to see, namel entered!

CHAPTER XLVI.

"How d'ye do—how d'ye do?" he said, bowing and shaking hands with all. "'Unity is force;' I am delighted to see and hear of so many good friends collected here at the old place. The Grange is becoming a perfect password for hospitality; I heard of you all in town, and felt that possibly my presence might be required to complete your contentment." A good-natured smile played over his features as he said this, and he accompanied it with a quiet rubbing of the hands as he glanced from one discontented face to another; for no man on earth could by possibility have been more unwelcome anywhere, than Elton just now, at the Grange; and yet all were for politic reasons more or less civil; even Angelina dreaded to a certain extent drawing down on herself his quiet sarcasm; nevertheless she was the first to recover speech.

"It is certainly strange," she said, "that we, who came down here for a little quiet retirement after the recent most painful event in our family, should be made the subject of conversation. Pray, by whom was Mr. Elton informed, may I ask, of our doings at the Grange?"

"My dear Angelina," he answered deprecatingly, "why ask so absurd a question? Ought you not to know, that when you have drawn after you to these wilds that cynosure of eyes, Narcissus Browne, the whole arena of wild young ladies in town would be raging against you? He is here, is he not?"

"Of course he is," said Bruce, slily. "Ah, ah! Miss Adair, I told you what the world would say!"

Mrs. Bruce laughed significantly too, for she knew how galling this supposition must be to her dear friend Angelina, rejected in all her overtures by him, as she so visibly was, daily and hourly, though done in all innocence, by the scarcely conscious man.

"And he is not the only attendant knight here," continued Bruce, delighted for once, in pleasing his wife,—"Sir Philip Montgomery is here,—what do you say to that, Elton?"

"Say!" exclaimed the other, affecting a look of incredulity perfectly natural, "that I don't believe *that*, old boy; I know our good hostess here to have a kind heart, and a forgiving one, too, but hang it all! Sir Philip Montgomery never could be an invited guest in the house of Richard Adair's mother."

"May we ask why, Mr. Elton?" hastily inquired Angelina, before her mother could reply.

"Because—does it need an explanation to any delicate mind?—poor Dick may have been wild, foolish in many things; but knowing as *I* do, as you all do, how that unfortunate creature was cast, rather cast herself and child, from a husband's tyranny, on his protection, by Heaven, he would have been a cold-blooded wretch to have drawn aside! I only blame him for one thing—not immediately bringing her to his mother's home, and making an appeal to the bosom from which he drew his own life, whether she should cast a mother, so shielding her child, upon the world; but young blood sees one side only in a generous act—self-sacrifice, never prudence. I perhaps, better than another, know how severe Dick's sacrifice has been—no, no, Angelina, Sir Philip never——"

Before he could complete the sentence, the door opened, and the man in question walked in. Elton knew he was at the Grange—he knew Mariam's probable persecutions so surrounded—and these facts brought him down; but he did not know his own heart yet, and how ill he could, under some circumstances, control it.

Speaking of poor Kate had brought the once blithesome girl so vividly before his mind's eye, in bitter comparison with her present heart-broken state, bereft of what she had loved so well—stricken with sorrow and self-accusation as her son's murderess, when her own act gave Sir Philip the strong arm of law to take him from her care,—for all this too he knew, and knowing it, as her husband entered perfectly at ease and at home, Elton

started up, and snatching his hat, brushed hastily past him, as if his very presence made the atmosphere infection.

There are some persons we feel bound to respect, however we may dislike them. Elton was one of these; and as Sir Philip's eye fell on the other's cheek, flushed by a red patch of generous blood, and saw the sternly fixed eye, full of honest disgust, turn from his own, his heart felt livid, as if its stream ran white with shame, and the forced smile was an ill-masked grimace of cowed pride.

Elton, with almost the agility of a young man, hastily ran down the steps from the hall door to the grounds, and walked on gesticulating and talking aloud to himself, until he reached a distant part of the lawn, hidden from view of the house, and here he paused. The day was warm for an English September, yet not sufficiently so to warrant the vigorous use of his handkerchief over the heated brow, as he took off his hat to cool it in the breeze; as he did so, he looked around, and there, beneath the very tree where Kate and Richard had so often sat and read together, was seated another—Mariam.

Yet all unconscious of the thoughts the locality had awakened in one to whom Kate had pointed it out with a sigh of regret for those happy days, Elton stood awhile watching her pensive altered face. He sighed, an immense proof of feeling in him, the most matter-of-fact man in existence; for he saw again the other two there in imagination, and, remembering all he had foreseen, foretold to Mrs. Adair, he exclaimed, half aloud, gazing on Mariam—

"She had her own way with them, and let her reckon their ruin above, as best she may; but she shall have nothing to repent of here, if Dick Elton can help it!" and so saying, he advanced towards Mariam.

The crisped leaves crackled beneath his feet; she turned hastily round, with a look of fear on the face once so proud, which made his heart ache; it made the orphan girl seem so much an orphan to all happiness. When she recognized him through the mental mist which had painted another, a glad cry

burst from her, and perhaps but one other in the world mig have had two hands so warmly placed in his, by a consenti heart, though cold usage might have outwardly stayed them, those clasping Elton's.

"So," he said, "Mariam, you are really glad to see the fellow here, are you?" and he seated himself on the rustic be beside her, still holding her hand, which lay confidin quiet.

"Very, very glad, dear Mr. Elton; for you are the only in whom I can place any confidence—even my aunt has als deserted me."

"Well, I'm sorry for that; she's a good woman as women in general, but she has her fancies too. I dare say some day will be better friends than ever. Let the wheel go round w the stream; we shall have good wholesome meal from its wo ing at last. There's no use hurrying it; it would only trou the machinery, and delay, not expedite."

"Those, dear Mr. Elton, *can* wait where they know there good corn in the mill, to carry out your metaphor; but when is chaff, what hope is there?"

"For chaff, read Angelina's prompting envy; Mrs. Ada weakness; the folly of another, and—and—Sir Philip."

"Oh! pray don't speak of him jestingly, even though re hensively; that man is too much an object of horror to me t lightly spoken of."

"And they want you to marry him, do they not?"

"All—all! and he—oh! save me from him, Mr. Elton—I cannot imagine the disgust he inspires me with."

"And me too, Mariam; I am glad we agree in that point in another—in all, I hope. I mean, you ask me to save you knew he was here; I came to do so, if *you will*,"—he look fixedly on her as he spoke.

Mariam met his eye unflinchingly; she felt no fear of hi

"I will now, as I before promised," she said, "take y advice in all things."

"Humph!" was the thoughtful answer.

"Do you know," he continued, after a short pause, "that Dick has married Kate?"

"I presume so," fell from the quivering lip, which grew paler at each word.

He asked a question only, which she read as an assertion of facts, long such in her imagination.

"You also know, Mariam, my child, that you must choose a husband soon, don't you?"

"I will forfeit all, and starve sooner than marry any they have selected for me, or any that I have met!"

"All very pretty in theory," he replied, with a shade of his usual sarcasm. "Starvation, persecution, dying for love, are all charmingly pathetic or romantic; but sit a week in a cold, comfortless room, on a snowy winter's night, *sans* fire, *sans* food, *sans* clothing or bed, and the very unsentimental cries of 'potatoes all hot,' or 'mutton pies,' will become far more melodious than the finest strain Sontag ever sang! Let us come down to earth, Mariam, out of the clouds, down too from your garret of pathetic starvation, and talk vulgar, common sense. Don't stare; I have come with a husband in my pocket for you."

"Marry!" she cried. "Marry! oh, no!"

"Of course, not just at present; but let me show you the advantages of matrimony, fortune, and peace of mind, with an honourable man. First, a protector, and all your present persecutors driven back discomfited. Next, your heart is good and kind—riches well applied are Heaven's best gifts; for we become its agents, and every little good act of ours brings us in immediate communication with our principals—peace of mind of necessity follows; for our loneliness is at an end, we have constant occupation—then these same principals approving us as agents, we rise to become their friends; and some day we shall receive an invitation to visit them in their palaces of wealth."

As he spoke, the whole man seemed changed, the voice, the countenance—all; a placid smile played over the face, often so

sarcastic, and Mariam's fixed gaze borrowed as she looked up.

"I will be guided by you in all," she said "if I can command my rebellious heart; fo man, and could not guide ill."

"Then promise to be my wife the day I cla taking her hand; but it was as a father's, "I am not young, but I will guide, guard, an

"But—but—," she uttered through her almost overwhelmed by this most unexpected know how I loved—still love Richard. I sho him, and ——"

"Regret, Mariam?—well, it would be na expect it; and believe this, if I see a cloud *never* will question, but comfort and cheer yo away. Besides, I will not ask you to fix the riage until you yourself think fit to do so. G protect you, and, proclaiming that right, dri portunate swarm about you. I am an old mar others may say or think, *you* shall never call try me—an engagement is not marriage."

Mariam's spirit must have been nearly bu placed Elton, much as she respected him, as a t the arrows pointing around her from all quart

When the inmates of the Grange met at dinn themselves completely thrown out of their pr the unexpected conduct of others. Sir Phil cast away on the perfectly calm, cheerful Elton ous of the other's presence as if he were by m sight and hearing; for Elton recklessly cut ac sation, as if sudden deafness had fallen upon quietly done, that the other could but bite his

Something of Elton's calmness had shed a Mariam; but to his practised eye, in it he allied to hopelessness, and that false quiet t flowers, giving forth no odour, save a sickening

fragrance. But others did not read her thus, and more than one wondered at the apparently cheerful tone with which she replied to all except Sir Philip, to whom a bow or monosyllable alone was awarded; but *none* read that, beneath this outward show of peace, the unquiet heart was reckoning its own pulsations, to calculate how long it would be before rest might come, and its task of propelling life cease.

Next day the Grange was in an uproar of amazement, discussion, refusing, consenting, and every strange and adverse feeling, when Elton seriously announced his acceptance by Mariam. Slavemasters and drivers are not indigenous to the States; many a good and perfect one is bred *at heart* in our isle of liberty. Angelina was one in petticoats. Nothing could equal her rage and disappointment at thus seeing Mariam emancipated from her tyranny; she, in her depth of cunning, better than any one else, had conceived all the other's bitter suffering and disgust at Sir Philip's loathsome attentions, and now she had freed herself, and, what was more painful than all, though Elton seemed the last man on earth to be her choice, the girl was evidently placidly content. Angelina unscrupulously, before both, called upon her mother to exert the authority vested in her, and forbid the engagement. Mrs. Adair, thus urged, commenced a sort of half authoritative, half deprecating refusal to sanction it. Poor weak woman! the real kindness of a milk-and-water heart was turned to curds by her dread of her daughter's anger.

Before even Elton could reply, who had sat smiling quietly during the discussion so offensive to himself, Mariam did so, and with a dignity and decision which astonished all, none more than himself.

"If I am faithful in my recollection of the contents of my father's will," she said, "I believe the clause orders that before a certain time I shall choose an eligible husband; I think none here will dispute Mr. Elton's right to that title?"

"*Eligible?*" cried Angelina, forgetful of all policy; "surely, mamma, you cannot, as her guardian, consider that Mr. Elton

comes under this head?—a man of his age compared with l
Lincoln's!"

Still Elton said nothing, but sat smiling and glancing f
one to the other, as if perfectly indifferent to the scene.

"I certainly think, Elton," hazarded the trembling
Adair, "that there is a great disparity between you.
position is a very delicate one; people may say I should l
prevented it, and indeed it seems *rather* absurd."

"What was my friend Adair's age when you married hi
quietly asked Elton. "Comparison is sometimes a good me
by which we attain facts; he was older than myself, althou
dear friend, and, as far as I remember, at least your senio
twenty years."

"Mamma!" cried Angelina, "will you allow yourself t
insulted in your own house?" She felt her cause failing.

"Permit me, madam," interrupted Mariam, "at one
assert my right of choice; I am only too proud in the affe
of such a man as Mr. Elton, where I have been so long degr
in my own eyes by the repulsive attentions of Sir Philip M
gomery." As she spoke, she placed her hand in Elton's.

Albeit a man not used to much show of sensibility, his l
trembled as he clasped hers, and the raised eyes, fixed on
face, had something so pure, so fatherly in their love, th
seemed painful to think that a marriage, which many m
cavil at and ridicule, would perhaps destroy their regard
ridicule is the fellest destroyer of every good sentiment,
all.

"Perfectly fulsome and disgusting!" fell from Angelin
she curled her thin, contemptuous nose; "at all events,
Lincoln, after so many triumphs, has fulfilled an old adage
'picked up a crooked stick at last.'"

"Hold!" cried he, laughing, "I have let you say all
pleased until now. Depend upon it, Angelina, that (than
you cordially for your beautiful simile) I can assure you
dear girl will find I am no 'crooked stick,' but one on w
she may fearlessly lean, one strong, too, to baton all her

mies; and, as you quote old saws, let me follow so excellent an example, and strongly advise you 'not to holloa till we are all out of the wood,' and then let us see who will sing loudest."

CHAPTER XLVII.

A SHORT time after the foregoing scene Elton and Narcissus were walking together down an avenue in the ground.

"I certainly think," said the latter, in continuation of their previous conversation, "that marriage is a fate, a predestined thing, both in act and inclination. I never felt the slightest wish to marry, and, when urged to it by Miss Adair, I proposed to the very lady you have been fortunate enough in securing, and failed signally; I never shall think of it again!"

"Yes, you will," answered Elton, confidently. "Marriage, as you truly say, is a predestined thing; but, like all things sent with us into the world at our birth, we have *several*, generally speaking, thrown in our way through life—one, a gift from above, if we are fortunate enough to discern it from its fellows; the others, temptations and luciferian, in every respect, for they blow a poor devil to—their master."

"Don't you think all things were destined for us before our birth?" asked Narcissus.

"Certainly not! To think that, I must suppose that no good intention—no good deeds of his own—would prevent a born assassin from cutting his predestined victim's throat. I believe *every thing*, the most trivial we meet, an allotted, registerep fate; but these are rocks or flowers in our path, according to our nature. We *must meet* all, and sense and religion were given to us to avoid the contact with some, to cling to others."

"Some things it seems impossible to avoid," quoth Narcissus, thoughtfully.

"Because folks rush on headlong, like wild bulls, of
you please; while others trip lightly between the r
stones, until they come to a pleasant spot of verdure,
they rest."

"How discern this spot, Mr. Elton?"

"Oh! 'tis not for *me* to preach you a sermon; but,
it, if we seek a guiding hand by proper means, we
blindfolded amidst these said rocks; and when somet
internally to us, 'stop,' pull off our bandage, and see t
green fields I speak of. I have found mine, and pe
verdant for my years, in Miss Lincoln!" He laug
said this.

"You are a great advocate for marriage *now*," said
opening his eyes; "and I have heard you rail
against it!"

"Because my hour had not come," whispered Elto
thought it better to laugh myself, than let others ri
forced celibacy."

"I dare say matrimony is a very happy state," utte
half-convined man; "and I will confess I felt much
pointed when Miss Lincoln rejected me."

"Try again!" cried the other, eyeing him scrutin
aside. "Rely upon it, the man who does not marry is
poor wretch having two legs, but one of them made of
He walks lop-sided all his life."

"I really think you are right!" answered the more
half-inclined Benedict. "But how, knowing as little of
as I do, avoid one of those marriages, like sins, as
say, cast temptation-like in our way, to submerge us i
resisted?"

"Depend upon it, Browne, that in the map of life, as I
described it, you have taken every path but the right one;
down some quiet little lane, where railroads have not ye
their way, consequently your marching intellect turns
from it, there is a fair and anxious maiden, sitting on a
stool, waiting patiently for you. Turn down the lane, my

fellow, pick up the stool, tuck the lady under your arm, and bring her home to your curacy."

"Mr. Elton, you have some one in your mind's eye, to speak so confidently."

"To be sure I have—one who has from the beginning been your good fate. She was made for you, and (oh! blind mole, burrowing ever in the dark) dying for love of you, and you would not see!"

"To whom *can* you allude?" exclaimed the puzzled man.

"To Angelina Adair—to what other?"

"Miss Adair! *I* marry Miss Adair! Oh! impossible; such a thought as matrimony never entered her head," cried the man, vigorously repulsing the more than once flitting thought through his brain, it was now becoming too tangible. "I have always felt that, had she been of our rival church, her inclinations were decidedly cloistral."

A loud laugh involuntarily burst from Elton, which not a little disconcerted Narcissus's thoughts; for he felt this man must know her better than he possibly could; still, his heart said nothing for her, not even his vanity was flattered. There was something very anti-feminine in his thoughts about her; she seemed destined, to all appearance only, to be a good fellow, in his eyes, to the end of her days. Elton, however, a thoroughly astute man of the world, was well pleased with the effect he had produced, and left it to generate good fruit in the not very fruitful mind of Narcissus.

When Elton rejoined Mariam, after their stormy meeting with Mrs. Adair and Angelina, any other man, especially one of his age, proud of the part she had taken in his favour, would perhaps have allowed *over*-attention and devotion to disgust the girl; not so Elton. He met her as a father might a dear child. He did not even kiss the hand ever ready to greet him. He was all respect and affection, and nothing of the lover; and this it was which made their interchange of thoughts and confidences so perfectly free on her part, for he never, even in allusion, spoke of their marriage.

And thus it became to her idea one of those far-off deem it better not to meet half-way, but reserve all o till it arrives in positive battle array before us; fo not disguise from herself, that a marriage with hi infinitely preferable to one with any other offered for ance, had but patient endurance to meet with fr undertaken as the sole means of escaping a worse annoyances around her. The first gratification a from her engagement being proclaimed, was the departure of Sir Philip, who too plainly, at last, fel her dislike to himself must be, to induce her to m of Elton's age, to escape his assiduities.

But if it be a painful labour to bring one's ow accept in idea an indifferent object as a future port self, how far more difficult a task to persuade a m his will and conviction to propose for a person almost to his heart as a wife! But once you gain the slighte the perversity and love of variety in his human natu work quickly, Augean-like though it be; and surely is this toil of inducing a non-marrying man to fall matrimony—not synonymous terms—with one he h much accustomed to, that the charm of novelty los power. But a clever and determined person can wor and immense was Elton's triumph, after literally cra words of solicitation into Narcissus's mouth, to find last gained courage to pop them out again, in the "Will you marry me, dear Ally Croker?" and the his forced choice was not the least inclined, despi "hems" and "haws" of his speech, to treat him with

She took him, in right good earnest, for *better*, not for nothing could possibly be more offensive to her maidenhood. And such is the inherent, soothing var nature, so perfect a "heal-all," that she persuaded he that in accepting him she should infuse gall and into the heart she of all others detested—Mariam's. arranged this girl's character in her jaundiced mind

capricious, so all-grasping, that where she felt disposed to marry, a love of showing, proving her power, made her trifle with hearts till she lost them. With this idea, great was her glory in parading her meek lamb in her silken but well-attached cord before all eyes.

Narcissus let all be done with himself unmurmuringly; he had acted as an older, wiser head than his own had induced and advised him to do, and he felt to a certain extent satisfied —not but that a feeling ever and anon stole irresistibly over him that he would rather it had been Mariam than Angelina; for though in point of fact his junior, his intended seemed *much* his senior. In short, he felt more fear than love; and no earthly power could have induced him even to raise her hand to his lip, or even catch the flitting fair digits half-way, as they playfully tapped "her naughty boy's" cheek; for she had become quite infantine in her love, and it sat most awkwardly upon her.

Whilst she was thus rejoicing, and showing off her placid intended to every one, the mover of this machinery, the steam power, Elton, sat behind the curtain of his deeds, laughing, and rubbing his hands.

"And now, Mariam," he said, after announcing the startling event to her wondering ears, "I think I have by this act secured two things—your peace, for Angelina has not one drop of gall in her heart now; it is a complete honeycomb, every cell overflowing with sweetness for Narcissus; she resembles those bees somewhere spoken of, which love to feed on thyme, from which they extract a juice all bitterness, but even while sucking it, it becomes honey, luscious honey. And surely thus all has turned to cloying richness in Angelina's heart!"

"And what besides my peace from sarcasm have you secured me?" she asked, smilingly.

"A much desired thing, I hope—a permitted visit to your aunt; she is a person I much wish to see you again on terms of affection with, and in all the business of love-

making at the Grange, I think they can dispense v society."

To this Mariam gladly consented, and while he w policy quietly endeavouring to gain his end, fortune him. Narcissus bore as much as most men can with but at last finding his stubborn heart refused to sm position, and the lady's attentions becoming hourly mor he resolved upon trying whether the old song spoke t that absence makes the heart grow fonder.

With this good intention, he made a pressing duties, to fly the Grange; but Angelina was resolve Kathleen to this second St. Kenin, and follow wh might seek repose. It would not have been exactly to accompany him; but this strong-minded girl invincible objection to procrastination, or any such time, more agreeably passed in billing and coo maiden meditation; consequently she proved to M beyond contestation, that an immediate visit to t indispensable, to order the wedding garments, the se which "dear Narcissus was so impatiently watching

Good-natured, sentimental Mrs. Adair thought so t slight hint sent all the visitors at the Grange flyi various covers, and the Adairs left for Eaton Square, Elton rubbed his rejoicing hands, which had so well d work.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THERE are two things which purify and sanctify earthly affections; these are sickness, and its frequent follower, death. Thus, as Adair hung over Kate, sinking into a state of low despondency and ill health, she became once again the Katty of their days of innocence.

In all she had been guilty of, a sustaining force at first was given in the love she bore her child—that removed, and all the vigour of life was gone; and then memory came forth, strong in power and conquering, marshalling in her train hours of happy, girlish joy—days of labour sweetened by an approving conscience; and lastly, a husband's kindness at first, and, *perhaps*, a want of that patient endurance on her part of subsequent harshness, which might have won him back; conjointly with this came the recollection of her hours of triumph as the fair Lady Montgomery, not least, perhaps, in her cup of sorrow, when she reflected how fallen and despised she now was!

Reader, remember we are painting a very weak human being in poor Kate—weak, but not vicious; for her fault arose from a virtue, like the illegitimate offspring of a hero. Beneath the weight of all this, she was fast sinking to, let us hope, peace. Whilst Adair hung over her, soothing her to the last, purely, unselfishly—for he felt every moment passed near her was doubling his crime in Mariam's sight, and losing even her friendship—all he now hoped for, the rest was a blank in hope's chapter of chances.

As the loss of her child became a fainter regret to her heart, the memory of all she had lost stood out in bold relief. There was nothing remaining of all her splendour but the tatters of remorse, clinging around her in mockery—she, poor beggar for

his supporting arm in mere charity, which had once seemed ever powerful to clasp her in passionate love!

Oh! all was a blank page before her, save for one little word writ thereon—"remorse"—and bitterly this ate into her soul: for sorrow's purifying hand had swept away the false happiness of her sin—the light thistle-down, and the rough prickly plant in all its uncouthness stood strongly planted at her feet. She could not uproot it; for Kate had not patience enough to water it with penitential tears till it should fall rotted to earth, leaving a smooth, even path for her footsteps. No, this she could not do; but she had courage to clasp its memory till the thorn entered her heart, when, wounded to death, she sunk into a remorseful grave, the sadder that she *knew* only pity would drop a tear on it—not that pity even which is akin to love, as preceding it, but the sad, cold, pale shadow which has risen from its ashes. A foreign grave, a stranger land, gave a last home to pretty Kate Bateman, and, perhaps, this is the saddest thought of any; somehow we feel, the least thoughtful of us, that we owe a respect to the earth—the home-earth on which our first footsteps trod—to give it back its own again in dust to dust.

Adair rose from the grave a wiser man, a more determined one in character. The death of one beloved, forms us; for it takes away our crutches, with which we went limping on, and we stand alone! Oh! this is a very heart-aching thought at first; how we totter like infants—babies to so many coming cares; but how very vigorous we grow at last, and the renovated limbs gaining strength, we rush forward to fight our way alone—to prove our strength and purity, like emeralds, by the fire glowing around, to sanctify us.

Adair had lost much—a woman's supporting, upholding affection. At first, he shuddered at the chill this loss brought him; then he, even he reflected—"only pure gold is enduring, this was dross;" and he grew strong in his loneliness, and self-relying. Her death left him free to look around, and a first duty called him back to England, to seek out her father as he

had promised her; and next, to make arrangements, though almost ruinous to his dilapidated fortune, to pay, to the last fraction, the damages which had been awarded Sir Philip.

And here we find him once again the supporter, though anonymously accomplished, of poor Bateman, on whom care had heavily fallen. The man's energy was insufficient to bear up against it. He tried pride, but that failed him; he had not one atom of it: its counterfeit, obstinacy, betrayed him, and, relying too much on it—mistaking it—he sunk into almost childish helplessness, especially after reading his child's early death in the paper; for, though he had concealed himself from her to starve almost on a dry crust, in the obstinacy of his nature, which would listen to nothing, he had been hugging himself with the idea, like a wayward child, that she was seeking him everywhere, and at last would inevitably discover his retreat, and the poor weary arms full often stretched forth at full length, to clasp the imaginary shadow to his yearning heart. Alas! another held her too fast, and the bony arms had carried her down to his palace of dust.

When the sad news reached him, the old man's strength of mind and body forsook him, and, as by an elfish spell, he sunk at once, without any intermediate state, into perfect childishness. Yet even thus he knew Adair, and only actual force could have made him abide a moment in his presence. Perhaps this was the severest punishment the other had ever met for any fault, for feeling in himself that, could all be explained, he was not so deeply sinning as having acted thoughtlessly, and with want of judgment; but how teach this to the childish old man, who once loved him so well, and who now wrung his thin cold hands, as the tears streamed from his eyes, and cried, "Richard, Richard, why have you taken her from me? Where is she? Will you not bring her back, back, back—back again?" and as each word fell from his lip, the eye grew more fixed and vacant, and the tottering steps struggled from the room, whilst the clenched hand, and heavy sobbing sigh, spoke all—he was *still* sensible enough to feel.

Of mere worldly reckoning or calculation, he had n left; thus Adair's only consolation was in being able t unseen for his comfort; and this charge he sacredly even amidst his own embarrassments. What wond that the once gay, witty Adair, grew grave and smileh walked onward like one reckoning every footfall shadow, until it should stop for ever on his grave.

Human nature is proverbially disposed to perversi woman's is perversity itself when she sets it off at f after some cherished idea, which will especially pe thwart some one to whom she bears a *little* ill-will— not talk of hatred, 'tis so ugly a vice for a good C Mrs. Wilton very nearly hated all the Adairs, an unjustly, as we have shown, nearly included Mariam circle, round which all the witches she could conjure u unhealthy dances on their midnight broomsticks, s away every kindlier thought. Though holding little int with the Adairs at the Grange, still she had become acq with the fact that Richard was an erased member fr household hearth.

There had been a time when Mrs. Adair's affection son would have overruled even Angelina's stern propri the prodigal would have been welcomed home. But, al for him there was no fatted calf—no open arms. He wa out of that home which should have drawn him into rep if he needed it; consolation, if he regretted his fault. borrowed virtue's white flowing robes, in which *she* v stainless and charitable, ever ready in their folds to con repenting sinner, and, trailing them through the mud, onward to proclaim, with stentorian lungs, the frailty o mortal, who, like overheated glass, had cracked, but not sh in the fire's too close embrace.

"It would be most indelicate, madam," said Angelin mother, "to admit Richard into this house, after so drea act, especially now that dear Narcissus is here by rig sacred calling should not be insulted by such a contact!

thus, once again, as too often is the case, the sacred calling was divested of all sanctity, by the ill-judging, badly disposed, and malevolent; for to whom should the erring fly, if not to those ordained to save?

Mrs. Adair was perfectly satisfied with all she said; Angelina had risen much in her mother's estimation since the orange blossoms were budding for her brow at the *modiste's*. Angelina had more than prudery urging her to this expulsion of her brother; she knew his embarrassments, probable ruin, in meeting, not alone the damages, but other liabilities; for this very clever lady lost sight of nothing of her own interest, and dreaded her mother's *weakly* assisting him, to the detriment of herself; so poor Adair was left to fight alone.

Mariam durst not urge for him; indeed, she was in ignorance of nearly all, for, had she been aware of his real position, not even maiden delicacy would have withheld her from pleading for him to Elton. Strange to say, for once a mutual sympathy —though arising from very different motives—induced Elton to unite with Mrs. Adair and Angelina, in "deeming it better to conceal from Mariam the death of Lady Montgomery," which they had seen in the *Post*. Delicacy kept others silent at the Grange before any member of the family, and thus she came to town in her ignorance, believing him married to Kate, who, poor misguided girl, was far more happily wedded, than in becoming the *perhaps* despised, neglected wife of Adair,—for the very best look lightly on that which has been lightly won, the weighty payment is all the woman's.

Let us return to Mrs. Wilton, whose fate took her, in company with her seldom absent children, into the Zoological Gardens, one fine, quiet morning, and there, amongst the nursemaids, mammas, and children, loitered a desultory-looking man—judging by his slow, languid gait; he did not seem to care for the animals, he looked at none, nor children, nor women—he avoided them. Sometimes an autumnal flower drew him aside a moment, then on he strolled again, evidently one not at peace with nature, for creating so gloomy a being as himself.

Mrs. Wilton was a conjecturing woman, like most of mind or imagination. "A young widower," she thought, looking at his hatband, and her heart drew near the solitary; and she walked behind listening to her girls' prattle, and wondering whether he had any such to soothe him. She was lost in thoughts of this nature, and the tide flowed on in gentle womanly feelings of pity, so much so, that when the stranger suddenly turned, and she found herself face to face with Richard Adair, the surprise did not quite obliterate kindlier feelings, and yet she coloured deeply as she bowed, paused, and stopped. We have said she was a woman of no common mould; too independent to ask, "What will the world say?" too good not to be *perhaps* too indifferent to its wickedness, for she was young and handsome.

Pity commenced, perversity seconded the affair; and, after a few embarrassed questions and replies on both sides, they found themselves walking side by side, talking in a more friendly manner than they had ever done before. Then, too, children are dreadful go-betweens, and almost always in some way illustrate Gavarin's *Enfans Terribles*. Simple, well-brought up children are Lavater's truest disciples, and read countenances by their own truth of heart. In less than five minutes, Mrs. Wilton's girls were holding one each hand of poor Adair, whose saddened face smiled downwards on those who were now, what poor Kate had once been, for she was ever before him.

The more Mrs. Wilton conversed with him the greater grew her pity, and consequent disgust towards his family. Before the walk terminated, she no longer wondered Mariam had loved him, and blessed fate that her engagement to Elton precluded other thoughts now, for she knew Kate had never been his wife, and was now no more. The one most interested had alone been kept in ignorance. Mariam was not even alluded to. Mrs. Wilton thought her safe in the country for months; and, after all we have said to prepare the reader for facts, it will not startle him, or her, to hear that, when they parted, she gave a cordial hand to his warm grasp—for he deeply felt her generosity—and added a very kind invitation to call and see her.

Mrs. Wilton having taken this step, was not a woman to stop there, and dwindle down into a mere receiver of a common call of politeness. No; she was a perfectly kind-hearted being; and when he presented himself next day, she placed herself on the pedestal of her matronhood, which seemed to her as far removing her from any possible danger or scandal, as if she were eighty years of age. Then, too, it was so well known she had declined many good offers, that it never entered into her imagination that any one could suppose she would re-marry; all this taken into consideration, she felt so strong in herself, that, resolving to ameliorate his state of despondency if possible, she bravely attacked it at its source, while she blamed, pitied, and soothed him.

Verily, it was a merciful act, nobly, generously done, and he felt it, especially when the trouble he durst scarcely look at, when they met, faded like gathered flowers by the handling, and the purest, truest gratitude sprung up in his heart towards her. With him, no other feeling was possible, but with her? True, she was older, and self-strong, but there is nothing more dangerous than comforting a handsome young man; we grow mothers for a loved baby, and feel so much inclined to lullaby him to rest. This is all Love's doing, else why did he take the form of a chubby child?

We don't say Mrs. Wilton was *exactly* in love, but in great danger; and, when leading the conversation one day to Mariam, she watched the heightened colour in his pale cheek, and the flashing eye, as he spoke contemptuously of her absurd engagement to "that old fool Elton," she felt a wish generate a sigh, both of which arose from the thought—

"I do not wonder she loved him;" and then followed the curious desire of knowing, "did he ever like her? if so, why not have proposed?"

Adair was a frequent visitor; he played with the children, and this was to her willingly reconciled mind an all-sufficient reason for his coming. Like a sister, she spoke of his affairs, advising, and with her strong mind guiding, his shaken, reck-

less energies. Often he tried to lead the subject to Mi
this she avoided, when once convinced he had loved h
he admitted freely now that which once he so sedu
concealed.

All the world is a game of mental hide and seek; now
quite openly. Thus she most guardedly withheld from
that Mariam had loved him—this really was a duty on
conscience now; and here we will leave them,—him, to fruct
his avowed intention "of settling his affairs soon, and go
abroad for ever;" her, "to comfort this poor young man, ex
off by his heartless family, as she would a brother, nothin
more; no, *that* were a mad impossibility!" And whilst the
were thus occupied, Mariam was preparing the most stupi
and almost ever-failing thing in existence, "an agreeab
surprise for her dear aunt!"

CHAPTER XLIX.

One day Elton called in Eaton Square, the one after the
Adairs' return, and finding Mariam impatiently awaiting him,
he drew her arm under his own, and walked towards Russell
Square.

"I will leave you to see your aunt alone," he said at the
door, "and call in an hour's time."

"Mrs. Wilton is out, but will return shortly," answered the
servant, in reply to her question of "at home?"

"I will go up then, and wait," Mariam said to Elton as he
turned away.

"And I must hunt out that stupid boy, Dick," muttered he,
walking down the street.

See what a game of cross purposes and odd chances life, *real*
life, is! Mariam ran upstairs, the servant omitted mentioning

o the niece the aunt's constant visitor, awaiting her return in he drawing-room. Mariam threw open the door; a man tarted up, exclaiming—

"My dear Mrs. Wilton, at last!"

The words spoke volumes of friendly intercourse—he turned —Mariam gave a low interjectional cry, and dropped on a hair.

"Good heavens, Ma——, Miss Lincoln!" he corrected the irst word as he hastened towards her.

"Richard! and here!" she exclaimed, in a low tremulous one, for woman's quick-sightedness read something so strange n an instant's glance, in this evident intimacy at Mrs. Wilton's, which his exclamation denoted, and more, the perfect ase with which he was awaiting that lady's return, that a ainful shiver passed over her frame.

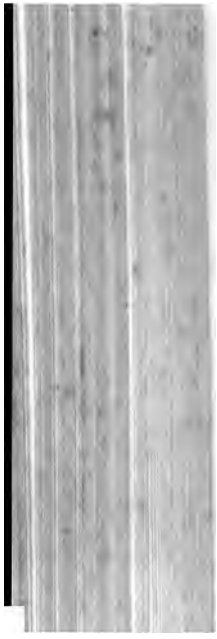
"Ay, *here*, Miss Lincoln," he replied, bitterly, "not yet an utcast from every hearth. Mrs. Wilton is not a mere hristian by name, but in deeds; strange, is it not, that a reature of this hour of practical worldliness, theoretical harity, should *dare* hold forth a hand to a poor devil like yself, leprous from very vice!"

He stood upright before her as he spoke, looking down upon er in cold contempt. She raised her eyes as he spoke, feeling hat a downcast look was not for her to wear.

"You are very bitter against me, Richard," she said sadly; I do not deserve it; none has suffered more regret for another an I for you; from my very soul I have grieved at your fall."

"Pshaw!" he impatiently cried, "leave cant to older lips; t yours utter something *still* of the spirit Heaven breathed on hem—charity! They are too ruddy and fresh, Mariam, to ant mouldy phrases out of date!"

"Alas! alas!" she cried, "and is it still so? has nothing of our dislike towards me yet abated? Forget me as I once eemed to you, and begin a new page in life with me, whereon may write myself your sincere friend, and you believe it— o, Richard!"



sympathized with the clouded eye of supp

"When I spoke of your fall, I me
"the loss of that dignified self-esteem
—the consciousness of having wronged
poor——"

"Don't speak of her *now*," he exclair
towards the table, and brushing away
oozing through the burning eyeballs. "
upon me, poor Katty!"

He had taken his hat from the table, i
painful scene.

As he turned, Mariam's glance fell on
dress she had not yet noticed.

"Merciful Heaven!" she exclaimed, ir
is Mrs. Adair——"

Her look of surprise and horror tran
replaced the hat on the table after a hasty
directed it; and, drawing nearer, leaned t
girl, and whispered, as if the words utter
would have awakened some spirit he had
quiet,—

"Yes, Mariam, so it is! We live an
day all life, a promise of fourscore years
step; and the next, why, we are nothing,

ıght all brutes—all but one, and she has been as a
ɜpirit to my reckless heart of late."
ı mean Mrs. Wilton?" she asked, looking up, as she
ıer hand to his clasp. "Oh, yes! she is good, I
how to *you* amazes me."
ɜe I have fallen!" He spoke in some bitterness.
t mistake what I intended expressing," she said,
ıgly. "I meant not the mere worldly phraseo-
ike cases. I would have expressed that you must
ın in self-esteem, having led another downwards;
ıipices we cannot glide down, we fall, crushed and

m, were the deed to do again, I would do it," he said,
"A woman with her child, from which her ruffian
ɣould have torn her, fled to me for protection. What
commenced with noble intentions—the devil makes
;-stones of these,—if I lost her, God knows, it was
vice on either part, but where take her? Had I
ɜ. Wilton as I now know her, to her I would have
suffering sister, and have dared Sir Philip to lay one
ır charge."
ınt is a pure Christian," uttered Mariam, faintly;
pained her in his manner of speaking of the other.
ne of us perfect, and jealousy is a stronghold with our
'But for this trouble you would never have known
purest flowers are closed by day, and give forth all
ty and sweetness at night."
apply this simile to you, Mariam; but for a sudden
should never have caused a tear of yours to flow. I
l I have seen it, for I thought nothing could move

not very expansive in expressing my feelings,
ɣe me, I can feel deeply. You think me a strange
ıu not?" she hastily continued, "in so freely speak-
on a subject which mere prudes would condemn me
ing even to comprehend; but my mother taught my

childish heart never to play the hypocrite; thus I often where, perhaps, I should seem ignorant."

"Oh, ever be thus, Mariam!" he said, seating himself her, affectionately; there was nothing of love-making act; there seemed too heavy a weight on either heart, for thistle-down to rest there.

"You shall approve me," she said, look up with a smile, to try and chase the cloud from his brow; "and one I sincerely respect will."

"You mean Elton?" he replied, sternly. "Can you him? A warmer feeling, if possible, might excuse his but I cannot understand respect."

"Yes, respect, Richard, and sincere, too, for one worthiest of his sex. Of more, we have never spok *knows* I could not love him."

"Why does he *know* that? Why have accepted him, She replied to the first question only.

"He *knows*, and asks no more; and my greatest regr be, when, the day of our union coming, I shall be for cheat my own heart into a different feeling towards hi the child's love of to-day."

"Then, in Heaven's name, why have accepted him? are not a foolish girl, to do so serious a thing without co ration; some motive must have induced this act; if not tion, what can it be?"

"Do not seek to penetrate too deeply into the motiv woman's conduct, Richard. I was forced, for peace sa choose a husband. Mr. Elton pointed out to me my po in all its painful colouring. I knew, he knew, I never s marry from affection, and I engaged myself to him did."

She stopped suddenly, a blush rose, and then in an in became crushed by so fearful a pallor, that involuntarily I placed an arm around her, deeming she was on the po fainting; the memory of her hasty error in accepting Philip, almost choked her with emotion, for she remembe

thought all the unfortunate events following in its
which conscience did not quite hold her guiltless.
am, I beseech you to speak to me in candour," he cried,
g all at that moment, but the doubt giving light to the
around him. "Tell me, for you are so strange, so
hensible a girl, that you must speak for me to know
lge you from mere appearances I dare not, for my own
ell me, Mariam, was Elton right when he once assured
oved——"
ooked upon him in so much wild affliction, that he
uddenly; to own her love now, would be almost a
her sight, if voluntarily done, there seemed so many
between them of vows and death; while yet she had
deny it, she did so, and rising from his clasping arm,
while the pale lips trembled at the untruth,—
ve never loved."
athing this, she knew that it was doubly destroying all
r her in his heart; it was indeed a self-sacrifice, for
d for possessing two hateful faults in his, or any man's
e stood a self-convicted, cold, heartless girl, who, from
love of trifling with affection, had accepted and then
Sir Philip, remaining unscathed herself amidst all
; yet she looked in his face so sadly, that though his
ry hope was crushed (for he could not imagine that
of mind which upheld her in this severe trial), he felt
ity for the sorrowing girl before him, convinced that
ret, unavowed care oppressed her.
am, my poor girl, I pity you most sincerely," he said,
er hand; "and indeed it has been a sad fate to both of
I believe now, that struggling with a nature not yet
d to love, you have tried to meet the affection on my
ich you could not be blind to, for I may own, now that
pride of heart, which feared rejection, exists no more,
first hour of our unfortunate meeting I loved you, and
eeming bitterness against you arose from doubting a
all my sorrow has arisen from recklessness, when

assured of your coldness towards me, Oh, Heaven! w drive two in contact, who might have loved so truly, b so blessed? *unis d'habitation et non de cœur,—c'est un t ment!* and none but the immortal spirits know what I h suffered."

Whilst he spoke, she had stood statue-like and cold, all h aching was in her throbbing heart. In outward seeming s was senseless to emotion; her eyes, glassy and fixed, did n move from his face.

"God help us, Marie," he said, pressing both her h affectionately in his own; "I read you truly: your kind h feels its own poverty towards me, and grieves that it can but regret and commiseration; we are both of us to be pi let us grieve for each other, in this we may find at le mutual feeling."

She amply obeyed him in sorrowing, but for what, he did not say; only the tears gushed from her eyes, as she h drew away the hands he held, and pressed them ov clouded sight, raining down their weighty load. There w effort or thought on her part to repulse him as he dre gently on his bosom, and the sobbing girl laid her head home, where every better thought was for herself, and p in heart-broken estrangement from all hope, or e that her life might pass away; for how acknowled affection, when one so good and generous as Elton m sacrificed?

The girl knew the extent of her own strength, and d abide the temptation of his prayers, if the veil were with from his eyes which concealed her heart from his view. I are acts of heroism in the world, far greater than th brute courage, practised by warriors of old; such a on hers, as she withdrew from those enfolding arms, whe never again might be held, and with a strong effor rendered almost abortive in persuasive power by the agony imprinted on her countenance, bade, besough to go.

self-satisfied is our nature! We engender an idea in nds, and, convinced of the infallibility of our judgment, it all its own devious ways, to the total destruction of our ess. So self-convinced was Adair that he had correctly Mariam's coldness towards himself, and that any further o move her would be vain, that he turned from the g girl, who had sunk on a chair, and prepared with a heart to leave her. Had he loved her less, it would not een thus—he would have sought at any price to win her; deep was his love, that he felt to call her his, unless her soul accompanied the gift, would have been a gift of to him.

ugh her tears, she saw how his strong arm trembled as tched it forth to remove his hat from the table. She e swollen veins in the agitated brow, the eyes bloodshot ie burning watching of the last hour, to detect a glimpse for himself—she saw this, and the girl's strong resolu- arly gave way. His back was turned towards her, yet d seen all—and Elton, Kate, everything was forgotten agony at parting; she stretched forth her hands, the ng lip breathed, scarcely uttered, Richard; she was on nt of avowing all—her very soul was on her lips—when ud-sounding knocker announced the return of Mrs. . On such trifles hang our fate often! Her arms d by her side, the words fainted in her heart, and when ied, the statue before him was one worthy his thought of loveless girl, one not yet awakened by her own heart's ons.

aps in the world there was not a less conceited man than -one less prone to deem himself an object of interest to a ; still, unless he had been a fool, it must have crossed nd that more than a common interest urged Mrs. to meet him with the *empressement* she had evinced, ware too, as he was, of her prejudice against him at one

Until the present moment, he had pe
their course, without troubling himself
terminate; but now there was someth
heart, that he felt it would be impossib
perhaps loved him, in Mariam's presenc
gratitude to Mrs. Wilton for her recent
self, which he felt he should be ill repa
disgust; and such inevitably would ha
he observed a coldness on her part, a jea
Mariam.

Actuated by this thought, which was
of a moment, he passed through a side-
Mrs. Wilton entered by the larger drawi
sidering for a moment the strangeness of
he be discovered. But the opening o
sound with the closing of the other, and
entering, had asked her servant, "Whe
the drawing-room?" and, being answer
hastened upstairs, leaving the remaind
mation to the will of the winds "and
opening the door, found herself in the p
agitated Mariam.

When we have a soul-engrossing tho
should afford us the greatest surprise los
Wilton involuntarily glanced round the
she had not seen Mariam for many we
posed feeling, subduing her disappointed
Adair, she clasped the other in her ar
comed her. It would have been impossi
trace of grief on Mariam's countenance.
words spoken, her aunt gazed for an inst
and then, as a thrill of pain passed throu
she was but woman, she inquired,—

"Has any one been here?—Mr. Adair,
boldly added.

"Yes," answered Mariam, and, despite all self-control, the faint blood tinged her cheek. "He was here when I entered, and he is gone," she concluded; and, speaking thus, her eye, that truest index of the soul, fixed its speaking gaze of questioning fear on the other's face.

Until that moment Mrs. Wilton had not examined her own heart as regarded her friendship for Adair. When we are in an uncertain state of mind, one little look or word acts as "open sesame," and back flies the door, showing us facts beyond.

She had convinced herself, without much argument, that gratification in finding him so different to what she had imagined him, to be a sort of *amende honorable* for past injustice; the whole grafted on pity, made her seek and uphold him.

Her niece's sad and inquiring look *awakened* her,—*only* woman, her first thought was jealousy, anxiety to know what had passed between them. The lips opened to question, the brow grew severe; at that moment her eye fell on an opposite glass, and in it she beheld her own handsome face, distorted by ungenerous passions, and Mariam's sad, patient one, suffering, and ready to suffer more, writ thereon. She closed her lids with a compressing action; a feeling of disgust towards herself was uppermost; here was she, who had so severely reprehended and opposed Mariam's affection for this man, loving him herself. Though still young, she glanced at the almost child before her, who seemed so doomed to care, and in her own eyes she grew old and hideous; to bring a last strong argument against herself to her recollection, in the vow she had made on the death-bed of her worthy husband, never to give a stepfather to her girls, the door burst open, and in they both bounded and clung around her; as she stooped to caress them, and hide her own confusion, she registered anew her vow; and, rising with a clear, serene brow, flung her arms round Mariam's neck, and said,—

"Forgive me, dear child, the coldness of my reception. I was grieved that you had met Mr. Adair again; but we will speak of it all presently, and, believe me, Mariam, he has not a sincerer friend, or a more pitying one than myself, poor fellow!"

The woman had lost half her womanhood, and found an angel's strength.

CHAPTER L.

It is not everything gaining a man's consent to marry you: it is not even then, as our neighbours say, *un fait accompli*; and this Angelina was forced to admit the truth of. Narcissus followed to his *lair*, found no chance of further escape; he could not desert his flock—he was too good a pastor for that: all he could do, was to keep as much as possible within the sheepfold: and there stood Angelina, like a rapacious wolf, gazing at him outside the paling—for the flock she could nothing.

What to her now were the Sunday schools? the sick and poor? They had been as stout ash-sticks on which she had leaned to help her forward; but, the goal obtained, away she flung her supporters—no more outgoings in thick shoes, as we have seen her, nor tracts, nor sick potions! For these she substituted morning consultations with her *modiste*, marriage settlements, and love potions in the evening unsparingly poured into Narcissus's ears. In the day he managed to avoid these, but in the evening, alas! there was only Christian patience to uphold him; for, the nearer the time approached, the more closely the cup of bliss advanced to his lip, the more repugnant grew his feelings; he was too simple-minded to

be able successfully to conceal his state of mind. Even the endship he once felt for her was rapidly turning to disgust. Her vanity set all down to the score of extreme bashfulness; r mother, too, saw nothing in his conduct but an assurance future happiness for her child, with a man so truly zealous id pious, that he would not even permit his affections to terfere with his duties; but others saw, or suspected. In ain Angelina hinted, about a fortnight after their arrival, that Madame Devy was the most punctual *modiste* she had ver met with—that *all* was completed, even within the pro-nised time!"

Narcissus's face was buried in a book—he couldn't hear.

Mamma had quitted the room, and then the downcast-eyed maiden drew near, and offered her boy a treat. "He should have a peep at the wedding-dress, it was so chaste and pretty!"

He certainly was the *first* of these adjectives, for he blushed at the very name of such a thing, and still more painfully when she displayed its modest purity; for he felt he ought to do what he could not—speak out, or else "for ever after hold his peace!" How he wished this possible! All this Angelina, too, felt, and, hastily seeking her mother, poured into her ear the duty incumbent on her, "to make him fix the day," as he was too shy himself to do so, despite his evident annoyance at the prolonged delay.

Poor Mrs. Adair thought it all true; she only saw through Angelina's eyes, and the veil of sentimental feeling enveloping her mind. She was a woman of sighs and tears, love-knots and broken hearts; and being resolved, if possible, in every case, to tie the knots, and to prevent the last-named, she undertook to speak to the swain. Something in Angelina's heart told her, though even unacknowledged to herself, that *he* was in no hurry, whatever *she* might be; and this made her recommence her bitterness against all others, especially as her once dear friend, Mrs. Bruce, never met her, which was a frequent occurrence, without anxiously inquiring, "When?" well feeling,

moment she could possibly so employ was p
and Elton, having led Narcissus up to the p
tion, left him to pursue his way unaided,
word from him might be of great benefit t
had a faint idea that he had in some mar
cissus to propose.

A sort of grateful sentiment made he
Mariam ; but now that Elton sat a quiet loo
the obvious want of impatience on her love
arose, doubly envenomed, against him and
She plainly perceived that, though Maria
Elton as her future husband, it had beer
importunity of others ; for the girl wince
was made to her marriage, hoping that, for
a good example set by one he evidently loo
would fix the day, if Elton preceded him
were called into activity to make this marri
own ; and thus again commenced Mariam's
host of sarcasms levelled against Elton.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Adair spoke to Narciss
acute agitation was perfectly ludicrous ;
sconced himself behind an avowed dislike
as being little productive of real happine
they had better know one another better be

'en this soothed Angelina's wounded pride; she could not se to herself his unwillingness, nor the covert smiles of uce clique, and the unpitying Elton (to whom she had)wn a gauntlet of late, by her persecution of Mariam), ommented on the pale anxiety depicted in Narcissus's st he should be jilted by her.

face certainly was pale in Eaton Square—Mariam's. the day she had met Adair at her aunt's she had carefully d another meeting with him; indeed, the thing seemed tually arranged between them, for whilst her aunt was—kind Christian—subduing her own once growing affection n, and on the other seeking some possible means of making ro happy, who, she felt convinced, still well loved one er, Adair took all out of her power, by writing her a most al, affectionate letter, in which he bade her adieu, alleging notive, that probably her kindness towards him might down the indignation of his family on her niece, Miss n, as he was not a received guest in his mother's

departure was a source of much annoyance to more than)ut the motives of some must show themselves as our tale sses. Mrs. Wilton had warmly taken his cause in hand, gued with Mariam's heart, though against her resolution te, that, stern as she otherwise might have been against an who coldly, deliberately enticed a woman from her ad, Adair never, except by his enemies, could be classed uch a one; erring, faulty he had been, but a kindly heart d him to this. And more, she added, that it was the duty rtuous woman, by every possible means, to reclaim a man ng from very recklessness on the brink of destruction. Mariam felt all the truth of her words; but how meet)ut with tears and regret? and what wonder if she grew nd trembling at every allusion to her marriage?

. there seemed but faint hope of delaying this much ; for even Elton sometimes spoke of the necessity of some

conclusion, though delicately, kindly done, like one forced impose a painful duty on her. Sometimes he would meet An lina's sarcasms and urgings for their marriage by a f yet serio-comic resolution not to be married by any but N cissus; and, out of respect for his cloth, a fixed determinat not to precede his union with herself. Eaton Square t became anything but what the abode of two brides elect mi be supposed in justice to be: one (Angelina) was all doubt a fear lest her marriage should by some adverse circumsta never take place—Mariam in agony lest hers should in ear be accomplished. The only cheerful face, Elton's, beca suddenly clouded like the rest, and an unsettled nervous exc ment took the place of his generally calm temperament.

"I am sick of the very name of marriage," he said hast one day, in reply to a sarcasm of Angelina's about the delay Mariam's part in fixing his; "and, if you possessed one gr of common delicacy and feeling, you would think of somethi else too at the present time—your unfortunate brother banish by your influence from his home, and, all-supporting affec failing him, rushing madly, recklessly, into every excess o Turf and its companions, which means ruin."

As he spoke he glanced at Mariam, and saw the cold sh creep over her frame, and quiver on the lip, which how said nothing.

"My brother deserves everything which may occu him," was Angelina's amiable reply; "and I am in no surprised at his present excesses, when we consider the in of his past life."

"Well, Miss Adair," uttered Mariam, faintly, "it is in to be hoped, should you ever need pity and excuses for h frailty, that they may be given you less sparingly tha award them to others. Heaven help poor Richard!"

"Of course," retorted the other, "we all know Miss Li will take his part, if not from perversity of charact disposition, from waywardness of affection; but, inde

must all admire the generosity of heart prompting a defence of one who, though loved, slighted the unasked-for gift."

"Never mind, Mariam, child," said Elton, gently taking her hand, "I love you, just because you loved my god-son, Dick, poor boy; and an old fellow like myself may be proud indeed of your confiding friendship, which gives him a right to protect you, to the despair of so many younger ones; let me see, how many do I know of?" Here he commenced reckoning on his fingers, and with a glance towards Angelina, which made her thrill with rage, he continued, "Out of delicacy we will not name the rejected, but pass them over like the toasted dead—in solemn silence."

"I really wish you would not be always bickering as you are, all of you," sighed Mrs. Adair. "I never saw three persons who less resembled persons——"

"About to marry?" asked he, laughing. "Never mind, Mrs. Adair; depend upon it, we are reserving all our honey for the moon which clogs with it."

"I'm sure, Elton, I shall be delighted when that time arrives; for I have had little peace with one thing and another of late."

"Has not the ordering of Angelina's wedding dress, not to mention her and Narcissus's billing and cooing, gratified and pleased you? Most ladies delight in such things. By the way, Angelina," he said, turning towards her, "is Narcissus in disgrace? I have not seen him here this age—that reads days in lovers' parlance; and I saw him last evening walking with a methodistical-looking fellow, ten times more melancholy in appearance than himself, *if possible*, for certainly your cruelty is making ravages on his health and beauty."

"Madame Devy's assistant has called, if you please, ma'am," said a servant, opening the door.

"Come, Angelina, put off that frown, and smile white satin and silver," cried Elton.

"Madame Devy has sent for Miss Lincoln's orders," an-

swered she, in exultation; for she knew every step forw towards matrimony was one of despair to Mariam.

The poor girl's head drooped, but she raised it, and ha exclaimed,—

"I have not sent for her." There was something so pai in this situation and its allusions, that now she could appeal to Elton's aid.

"I sent for her," answered Mrs. Adair; "as Maria guardian, it is my place to see that all due preparations s be made for her approaching marriage."

Elton saw the hand directing all this, and rising instan cried with a tone of authority, which his position there g him,—

"Not this morning, if you please, madam; pray, tell person to call some other day. Mariam has promised m walk; and, moreover, when we marry" (the word was sligh accentuated), "both our tastes are so simple, I doubt if shall require Madame Devy's aid."

Mariam's eyes filled with tears as she looked up, astonish amidst her gratitude, in the man's face; she could comprehend him, but she felt all his watchful generosity.

"Come, child," he added, "run and put on your bonnet. we shall lose all this fine frosty day."

She did not wait a second command, but the door clo behind her as Angelina cried,—

"Upon my word, madam, it seems you are no longer mistr in your own house, to command or be obeyed."

"Obedience commences *before* marriage, Angelina," he sa laughing, to turn the brewing storm. "I am teaching it to future wife; and you too are learning it, for you are oblige a great extent to submit to Narcissus's will."

There was too much significance in his tone and look for to boldly dare unpleasant truths by retorting.

"Settle it amongst you," sighed the dispirited Mrs. Adai her spirit was crushed by the heavy, unsentimental air ar

her; "for I am tired of all these extraordinary proceedings, so very different to what took place when I married."

A few moments more found Elton and Mariam arm-in-arm, proceeding towards Russell Square.

"Mariam," he said, after a silence of some minutes, "don't you think me a very strange man?"

"In what?" she inquired, with some confusion; the conversation of the morning had filled her heart with a strange fear; she dreaded what his next words might be.

"Why, in possessing a right which so many would use intrusively—that of urging the fulfilment of our engagement."

She was perfectly silent; how thank a man for clemency in such a case? and what other sentiment could she profess?

"You are silent," he continued, "and that is worthy your candour. I know, child, you cannot *love* an old fellow like myself; you accepted me because I was less repulsive to your feelings than any other offered; and I proposed myself as a barrier against their attacks. All I ask you is, not to judge me severely—respect, if you cannot quite love. I will never intrude my attentions until the day I see that we *must* marry; and I suppose that day will come, sooner or later."

He looked fixedly at her as he spoke.

"I *do* respect you, Mr. Elton," she replied, looking up timidly in his face.

He pressed her arm kindly, and then hastily exclaimed, as if the thought were linked with his previous conversation, "Poor Dick—poor Dick! Do you know, Mariam, that boy is my greatest affliction; for I feel as though I had not quite done my duty to him? I should have acted as his guardian with more decision, and not have permitted his foolish mother to try her absurd practical follies upon him, as she has done. She alone is answerable for all. And you too, a little, Mariam," he added suddenly, fixing his eyes on the girl's glowing face; "for your too great susceptibility has caused much misery, for you loved this poor boy of mine well—did you not?"

"Oh, Mr. Elton!" fell from her lips, as her troubled sought the ground, "for mercy's sake, drop this conversa it is painful in the extreme between us."

"And vain now, my poor girl, is it not? Well, I wish it been otherwise for both your sakes, for you would have happier with him than with me; and yet it would pain me de to lose you now." During all this sentence, his eyes never quitted her face.

"Have you heard of him lately?" she inquired, with e "I hear so much to pain me of him, if true."

"Heard? yes; he is running the maddest course any one follow," he replied with energetic annoyance. "This is greatest trouble. Ruin on all sides, he plunges headlong and one of the best creatures in existence, without a hop excite, or friend to guide to better things, is, I fear, irrevoc lost; but here we are at your aunt's. We will resume subject another day; I will leave you, and call in an hour."

CHAPTER LI.

MARIAM entered, at the servant's request, to await the immediate return of her aunt, who expected her. Elton turned away; but, before he had proceeded many steps, a servant followed, and mysteriously requested his return, as Mrs. Wilton was at home, but wished to see him, unknown to Miss Lincoln.

A few moments saw him seated in a quiet breakfast parlour, in earnest, low converse with that lady; and there we will leave them, and follow Mariam into the drawing-room, the door of which scarcely closed upon her, when, from the embrasure of a window, stepped forth a figure which it needed not a second glance to recognize, for the heart acknowledged what the troubled sight might have made otherwise a doubtful vision. Adair stood before her.

He was pale, worn, and a cold, reckless, but not *roué* air cast a gloom over the once fine, noble face; though noble still, it had so much of hopelessness, that the spirit's wings were closed from soaring, and the mere man of care stood before her. He did not start—he scarcely seemed pained or glad. A smile, the shadow of one, crossed his face, as he held out a nerveless hand to her trembling grasp. What wilful blindness falls upon us sometimes! He did not perceive her agitation, or, if seen, it passed as a mere surprise.

"Hah, Mariam!" he said, "we seem doomed to meet here! Tired with my companions of the field, I ran up to pass a day or two in the sweet variety of town!" He laughed ironically. "And that failing to amuse my *blasé* heart, I ventured here again, to sip a purer stream at its source—I mean, in the enjoyment of a sweet woman's society."

"You mean my aunt," she said, agitatedly; "and receive you kindly?"

"Ay, as ever; only I have been lectured ever came."

"When was that, Richard?"

"Yesterday evening. She told me you were coming and wishing to see you once more, Marie, here I am; s faithless hostess, is absent—so let me do the honour, an you a chair."

He tried to seem gay, but it sat ill upon his h brow.

"I wish Mr. Elton had not left me at the door," sh forgetting at the moment how painful the name mus him.

"Leave Elton alone," he hastily cried; "I do not see any one but you—just you, once again—for I am England shortly."

"Where are you going, Richard? and why go? W stay, and try to be content and happy?"

"Content and happy!" he scornfully laughed, pushi the hair from his brow; "content with what?—the loss I do not speak of worldly losses; these are dust, and s happy—will *you* teach me how I may find that?"

"I would try."

"You alone might have done so once; now, that is a forgotten—no, left on my pillow when I quitted it v aching head on awakening."

"I would lead you to it now," she said, timidly tak hand as he sat beside her on a couch, "as far as my po persuasion might avail; for those who should, have d you—they hope to reclaim you by coldness, estrangem would try kindness and affection, before your mad gallo shall lead you headlong over the precipice of destruction

"You are severe, Mariam; but perhaps I deserve it— not taunt me with the past."

"Oh, Heaven forbid!" she exclaimed, in deep emotion. "I would lead, not harass or drive; let me speak to you as a sister —a loving one, Richard; such I once was to you."

"Far more to me, Marie, you were—and are."

She did not reply, but continued,—"From my soul I pity you; for your faults have been the errors of others. Mr. Elton meant you well; but he was, perhaps, injudicious in using sarcasm, where gentle counselling had been better, but he did it in all kindness. Your mother—she, too, was wrong; for she treated you as a spoilt child, but she did it in love; so, Richard, forgive all, for Love's dear sake!"

"What do you know of that?" he asked, scornfully laughing; you who never loved!"

"True." And she was silent some moments. "But no!" she cried with energy, "I have loved. Nature were imperfect without it. I had a father and mother to love once, and now—why, we love, if only the dumb brute which looks almost human affection in our face, which it is powerless to utter. Love is in every breath we draw, and the full heart must breathe it forth again on the creatures around it, or burst with its store! I love you, too, my poor Richard, as a sister may avow."

"True, Mariam," he answered, gazing in deep emotion on her glowing cheek; "and I prize it even so; I never had a sister's love. Angelina——"

She hastily interrupted him lest one harsh thought should mar the gentleness she sought to implant in the now arid soil of his heart; still, as she strove to defend her, she dropped her glance on the ground, lest its flashing should betray the scorn she felt for that cold, heartless girl.

"Miss Adair," she said, "is not to blame; 'tis, I think, the erroneous education she has received, by the fault of those who endeavour to engraft on a woman's mind a man's energy and knowledge, which chokes all gentler virtues; and thus, tearing out of her heart its silver chords, string it with a hempen coil,

toneless and rough. But, forgive her; I think she m
well; and I, as a looker-on, seeing where support i
come to cheer you on."

"You can do that safely, Marie," he said, bitterly;
there is no danger in that path, but for me——" She
not to hear him.

"I come fearlessly," she continued; "your mere
girl might not dare so much. Reared a tender, hothou
the dread of the world's cold breath would kill her; b
my half-savage Indian nature, you know, to uphold
tried to smile). "I can brave the world, which I can
prehend; sometimes the thing we know affrights u
ignorance we dare many dangers."

"Why dare anything for me, Mariam?" he cried, imp
rising and pacing the room; "I am an object of no
your affections."

"Have I deserved this, Richard?" she said, sadly
proachfully, rising and leading him back to his seat;
not told you how sincere my regard is for you—how
pity when I see the indifference of others? Let me
back to what you were; I will not drag you over tha
road, wounding your feet on the rocks you have stre
recklessly, but not wilfully; I will not do this, callin
repent as the bleeding footprints mark your way. N
lead you onwards over a smoother road, a little rough
perhaps; but we shall come to a mossgrown path
where the little laughing flowers shall look up as yo
peeping in your face as they cast their soft odour an
purify the very air you inhale; and when we arriv
Richard, we will sit down, and breathing the Heav
perfume, bless Heaven for its mercy, and *then*—only th
will look back and shudder over the rough ground y
escaped from, and looking thus, bless God that it *is*
This I will call repentance."

As she spoke thus, her hands held his, and the de

es were fixed on their united clasp. She spoke earnestly, but
mblingly.
The man must indeed have been free from all self-
eem, not to see that her very soul was in every word and
t.
" Mariam," he cried bitterly, as he disengaged one hand, and
essed it to his aching brow, "you will drive me to double
speration! You point out heaven, and condemn me to the
ll of only possessing your guidance so far, and no farther!
) you think I ever could be happy without you? Have I not
ed all, even my bitterly regretted fault, to forget you? No,
l; I will plunge no deeper. I will go—go as best I may,
d seek repentance—reformation—alone. Near you, I should
ver find it, knowing that the day I became a better man
uld be one of despair to me, for I should lose you! You
ist be mad to think I could do so."
" I do beseech you, reflect," she uttered, scarcely intelligibly;
you have been wild, but not so guilty. Oh! think how deeper
ror will pain all who love you, will——"
' All who love me!" he impetuously cried; "who are they?
u do—true, but in mere charity, as you would a dozen others
o needed your ministering care. I crave, I must have more
lead me to peace and wellbeing; I must have love, or the
de world lies before, to amuse me still." There was little
pe of joy in his wild, bitter laugh.
' Love," she whispered, "what could that avail you—to have,
I lose it?"
' I do not understand you," he replied, looked inquiringly in
face; and yet, despite the pallor so visible there, without
gleam of the truth crossing his mind.
" Understand me at last," she cried, while the tears gushed
n her eyes, raised in all their depth and sadness to his,
hat if you need a woman's love to cheer you, you possess it
all the fulness of its first unalloyed fervour, Richard; why
you this to day, when it is vain, and why have we been so
d until now?"

But one word fell from his lip as his arms encirc
trembling girl.

"Marie," he whispered so lowly, that it seemed as
breath; and then, as a faint generating echo, came the
"my Marie," as he strained her to his almost bursting h
and her long-repressed tears fell heavily over that love so
concealed, so hopelessly acknowledged now.

"My Marie!" he said at last, in a low tone of inexpressi
tenderness, "let all come now, all that fate may award, I ca
not—I possess you; and the thorny road you spoke of is passi
We are on the greensward together; and while I repent m
my weakness, faults and follies, I feel they have been amply
punished, in not knowing your love until now."

"Richard," she cried in agony, endeavouring to struggle fro
his arms, "you forget that we can never be happy, never united
Oh! I was in fault, deeply so, when I permitted this long-co
cealed secret to escape me; whilst I am speaking to you of righ
would you have me wrong one who has never forgotten to shie
me from all—Elton? This was a voluntary act, and I must abid
by it."

"And can you be another's," he asked, "less now than ever,
when a moment of so much deep joy has been ours?—this
Heaven-sent moment of love and reconciliation."

"I never will pain Mr. Elton," she answered in deep affliction;
"he has been too good and true to me, for me to render him false-
hood and deceit."

"He is too good and kind, Mariam, not to feel for us," was the
reply, as he once more drew her on his bosom, as if there alone
she could ever find a home.

It is unfortunate that all the senses we require cannot be brought
into play at once; the straining of one, weakens another. Thus
both were so absorbed by their affection and fears, that hearing
became a weakened power, and thus the door of the second
drawing-room, which had been locked on the inside, gently
opened, and whilst they were yet speaking, some one behind
them placed a hand on a shoulder of each; they started in terror,

and, looking up, beheld Elton's grave face surveying them over the back of the couch.

At that moment it was Mariam who felt the keener of the two their approaching separation, for *she* only saw this. Adair, on the contrary, in an instant resolved that nothing short of superhuman power should tear her from him; and thus, as Elton walked silently round to the front of the couch, and dropped down between them, Adair sprang up, and, with outstretched hand, sought to welcome the friend to whose good heart he purposed appealing. But the other, affecting not to see the movement, seated himself, and took Mariam's trembling one in his; but the face, though serious, was not severe.

"I was there," he said, pointing to the now open door, "and heard all."

"Then, Elton," quickly responded Adair, "you must know and feel how impossible it ever would be for Mariam and myself now to separate?"

"She engaged herself to me, of her own free-will," was the answer. "Did you not, Mariam?" he added, addressing her.

"I did, Mr. Elton," she replied, bowing her head.

"Look up, my child," he said, as the serious face relaxed into a smile of deep meaning; "look up, and respect, if you cannot love me. There is but one thing I feel incapable of pardoning you for; that is that you should not long since have read the motives which actuated my conduct. As for that fellow" (he designated Adair), "I can still less excuse him; for he knew me from his boyhood, and to you I am only the acquaintance of a day."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Adair, amazed, whilst Mariam's inquiring glance was anxiously fixed on his face.

"Ah, well!" he continued, as if thinking aloud, without replying to the question addressed to him, "'tis a melancholy proof of the deceit of the world, that when a man is sincere, and not changeable as a weathercock, in all he says or does, no one gives him credit for it! Here have I been," he turned to

Mariam, "telling you, ever since you first met me, th
had the slightest thought of marriage; and, yet, a
natural piece of deception, you see me fling myself li
fool at a young girl's head, and you do not once open
to reproach me with my practical error where my theo
good!"

"Do you mean to say you did not intend to mar
exclaimed Adair, grasping his hand.

"Certainly not; I made a fool of myself in appear
laughing-stock of all, to give her peace, Dick, and ke
you; for I knew both your hearts better than you k
yourselves."

By an involuntary movement of gratitude Mariam
flinging her arms round Elton's neck, embraced
sincere reverence and affection.

"Ay, you hussy," he cried, returning it as he drew
child on his knee; "you can hug the old fool now
deuce a kiss, Dick, would she give me when I was
though I often felt inclined to take one when I saw he
endurance, not alone of myself, but the cruelty of oth
Mariam, my child, not even you, tempted me to
changing my state. Here, Dick, take her, and for m
well as her own, love her, for she deserves it!"

As he spoke he slid her gently from his knee besi
whose hands clasped the blushing girl's in his, with t
eloquence far more expressive than words.

"I am not worthy of her," he said, after a silenc
minutes; "would to Heaven I were!"

"Richard," said Elton seriously, "let all bygones be
Depend upon it, a just but merciful hand will ch
always for our sins; let us not refuse the happiness
Be assured that our errors are their own avengers;
often when, in the midst of some scene of joy, we hea
sigh, it is the memory of perhaps a repented, but as ye
celled fault, which is sent to chasten us."

"If Mariam will but be my guide," Adair said, "I

no more faults for the future; and the past, she shall pray for me, and I will hope it may be forgiven."

What she said was whispered as he drew her closely to his heart; and Elton, with humid eyes which would have amazed those who dreaded his cold, cynical nature, gazed fondly on them.

"Is it not strange," he said, shaking his head sagely after a pause, with a profoundly thoughtful air, "that we are such perverse animals? Here have I been, for upwards of a year, endeavouring to lead you two into one another's arms, and, mule-like, you turned away; but the instant Mariam belonged to another, and there were all sorts of barriers between you, your entire energies were called into play to overleap them! Assuredly the forbidden fruit has sown more seed in this world than any other?"

"Even than the tree of knowledge?" asked a gentle tone behind them; "I come, nevertheless, in search of some." If Mrs. Wilton looked a little paler than usual as she clasped her niece's hand in Adair's, none dreamed of the cause, not even man's vanity, which generally, though gorged to excess, craves more; for once it was satisfied in Richard's case, in Mariam's affection.

"What are you going to do with them?" she asked, drawing a chair to the circle, and addressing Elton; "you have still much to overcome."

"Then to you, too—to you mainly, I owe this happiness!" Adair exclaimed with warmth, kissing the soft hand he had taken.

"No, 'tis all Mr. Elton's doing," she said, deeply blushing as she released it in seeming playfulness; "he schemed all."

"But you permitted the poor outcast to call you friend! I would to Heaven my deeds had ever been like yours; then I might have hoped for so bright a reward."

"Hush!" exclaimed Elton, "let us talk common sense. Mrs. Wilton is quite right, much remains to be done. I would to goodness Angelina were married! But it appears you may

entice a man to propose, but he is not married for all that." He glanced slyly at Mariam, on whose lips a sigh rose, a practical proof of Elton's words—that our faults will send up their summons to memory from the heart; *she* thought of Sir Philip.

"Come, my dear Mrs. Wilton," said Elton, rising, "let us leave the children together, and we steady folks will go and talk common sense. I daresay they wish us at Jericho! Think how many sweet things they must say to make up for time lost, and the hours they cannot meet in, since Dick is a blank and at home."

Mrs. Wilton followed her summoner, and we will follow her, nor be indiscreet enough to publish all the two spoke in their half-hour's conversation, which seemed as a minute. We will only name one thing: that Adair, in common honesty, returned a little ring which he had picked up on the carpet where it had fallen when Sir Philip restored it, and Mariam, without a desire that another should claim it, placed it, with trembling fingers and blushing cheeks, on Adair's hand, whilst the rich, pouting lip acknowledged him her heart's choice.

CHAPTER LII.

ANGELINA was one of those who find life filled with disgust-
g things. Thus, nothing could equal her loudly expressed
elings of that sort to her mother, when she saw the extraor-
nary change which had taken place between Elton and his
fianced wife. They were always whispering in corners,
alking out together, and then her conscious blushes; all
ere painful enigmas.

There is nothing more distasteful to a perverse mind than to
e others happy. Especially, if we are miserable ourselves,
all times it is unpleasing; but now, when nothing seemed
pable of warming her statue lover Narcissus to life, when,
ce his namesake, he was too evidently dwindling to a shadow
om an overdose of love; *not* a voluntary offering from himself,
it a too fond exotic, imbibing all his native vigour. He had
:ed the day; it was as distant a one as possibly might be,
ith decency, considering the wedding-cake and dresses were
l ready to be eaten and worn. The hours to her were ages;
him, every day, when he arose, a cold sweat stood on his
ow, as the ever-present imp, calculation, like a too ready-
ckoner, told him another day had fled, and that of the month
ere now remained but twenty-nine days.

It was not a positive dislike to her, but a more than human
staste to her as a wife; and yet, like a good child, he kissed
e rod, and sought comfort in the society of the very man who
d beguiled him to this fate—Elton. But this latter found
his once powers of persuasion vain to induce him to abridge
e date. He seemed to have no plans—make no preparations.
e had to think of all this; and the bitterness it was to her
irit, instead of being coaxed, like a bashful bride, into all
rts of little concessions and counsellings for the future of their
arried home, to be daily obliged to impose some unpleasant

task on her mother, who wrung her hands in sentimental despair, as she recalled her own wooing time.

In this state, it was anything but delightful to observe the good intelligence, and, more, the unreserved affection of Elton and Mariam. More than once he spoke of their approaching union, and a warm blush, and accompanying smile, lit up the girl's face, once so sad. Angelina had but one phrase to express her spite; for her only consolation at first had been, in noticing Mariam's heartbroken look of despair, which, as by miracle, had changed to one of light and life. Even the dark sullen countenance of Leah, which had borrowed its tone from its mistress's sorrow, and had almost affrighted Angelina's strong mind, when she met its scowling expression fixed upon her one of Mariam's persecutors—now expanded in a broad black smile, so perfectly joyous when natural, and set off by the ranges of ivory teeth, as she changed her silent indignation now, to a pleasant mode of welcoming Angelina, whenever they met, with "Missy Angelina quite well? How 'im Miss Browne? Ah! ha! Missy be a merry wife soon, ah! ha!" and the smiling creature, like a mocking fiend, would pass chuckling.

There was nothing disrespectful in all this—far from it—but it touched a bitter chord in Angelina's heart; for, though perfectly unacknowledged to herself, nevertheless an instinct feeling prompted the thought for certainty's sake, of "Would to Heaven the marriage were over! I am tired to my soul of doubt."

Then she argued that it was all Narcissus's pious charity which made mundane matters so indifferent to him. He would alter with matrimony. And, sad to say, this once model young lady in all religious matters, irreligiously exclaimed, "I wish Narcissus were just a *little* less evangelical until the marriage takes place—he makes one look so absurd."

Elton quietly commenced a new trial of generalship: found that Mariam, no longer perverse, gave *carte blanche* as to employment to Madame Devy. He, taking to himself

credit for her calm submission to the matrimonial projects of her guardian, one day ventured to insinuate a wish that poor Dick, his godson, might be forgiven, and received, prodigal though he was, in the maternal home.

His mother would have too gladly acceded, for her heart yearned to see him; but Angelina stood a Cerberus at the gate, and her word was law. Had poor Narcissus had courage or energy to act, he would gladly have lent his aid; but as it was, when Elton endeavoured to lead him to interfere, it seemed as if the already overburdened camel dreaded another weight imposed upon his back.

"My good soul," he would nervously ejaculate to Elton's entreaties, "let us get this affair over first. I can think of nothing else, and then we will see!"

Elton shrugged his shoulders, and walked off to consult with Mrs. Wilton.

Poor Elton had indeed troubles enough to occupy him. When he thought all perfectly settled between Adair and Mariam, the first rapturous delight passed, Dick's high spirit arose to remind him that she was an heiress, and he a ruined man! This took some days to restore him to tranquil hope again, and all was once more like a skiff on a lake of glass, and the lovers rowing joyfully on; for Elton insisted upon making a settlement on his godson of all his property.

Another scruple, too, had to be overcome—one, too, of much delicacy.

Both Adair and Mariam thought of poor Kate, and he, even at the risk of much danger in the delay, would gladly have paid a tribute of sorrow in this self-denial to her untimely death; but here again Elton urged, "Kate flung herself on our protection; you can scarcely be deemed in fault, the position was so difficult a one; moreover, Mariam *must* marry soon—choose whether it shall be you, or another!"

The point was gained, and all seemed fairly to advance towards a happy termination. "Thank Heaven!" the perplexed guardian and godfather cried energetically, "for giving

me this distaste to matrimony; children would hav
me into an early grave!"

As time moved on, and the day of Angelina's
approached, he grew more buoyant in hope, having fo
good excuse for not being married at the same time, as
wished. However, in this he enlisted Mrs. Adair on
who liked the *éclat* of two weddings better than a doul

"Let Angelina be off," said Elton to the other t
Wilton, Adair, and Mariam; "and then, Dick, my l
shall go home, and be well received, I promise you!"

And Angelina seemed not unlikely to be as he desi
for the time was expended of her maidenhood all but fo
and she was positively smiling as Gunter's men cro
path at every step with some mystical preparations
wedding breakfast.

Let us now look at the bridegroom. Up to the pres
he had borne all with patient endurance, the day on
Indeed it is doubtful whether, like Lucy Ashton, he
except at intervals, oblivious of the truth, he seemed so
in some affair, *hors la maison*; but when in it, he su
and that was all she, his intended, now deemed it po
obtain from him, and her *amour propre* sat down satis
with none other would he have been different.

Two days before the projected happy one, a change ca
him; he was nervous, excited, ever asking questions lik
seeking to divert thought. The evening arrived prio
happy day; of course, he was in Eaton Square.

In as delicate a manner as possible he had endeav
defer the wedding for a week, "for a most urgent
But no one paid attention to this wish; it was expr
Elton, who had his own reasons for hurrying Angeli
the wedding tour. At last he ventured to speak to Mrs
but she "Pooh, pooh'd" the suggestion, as emanati
a most extraordinary bashfulness on the part of a mar
Narcissus! he was misunderstood by all.

The affair was moving on peaceably enough until

one before the event—we are retrograding a little—which
to come off at St. George's; when the ever busy Mrs.
oe cast a brand into the fire, which threw a lurid glare of
ontent into Angelina's already fermenting mind against
.

hat lady had became of late, together with her placid
se, a frequenter of all missionary meetings and black con-
ions; and at one of these, the previous evening, she met
'cissus,' all animation, delivering himself of a speech, calling
n all to take up their wallets and journey off in quest of
s. He was no longer the pale, thoughtful Narcissus, as
ate in Mrs. Adair's drawing-room, but a man whose soul
ke out at last, and to some purpose. After haranguing his
ience half an hour, he was concluding with—

And let none charge me, like the many, with preaching
t I would not practise, for——"

t this moment his eye fell upon the amazed countenance of
. Bruce, who, by those ferreting qualities which belong to
es of inquiring, busy minds, who take up any new caprice
with her piety was only this), had discovered this mis-
ary meeting, somewhere near the Elephant and Castle.
at he intended to say is one thing, what he gave utterance
another; it was a confusion of the most ambiguous sen-
es, quickly succeeding one another, in the midst of which
seated himself, and, wiping his agitated brow, left his
ers as wise as they were before about his half-avowed
tice of a cherished theory.

rs. Bruce rushed off to Angelina, who certainly felt that,
gh espousing so pious a young man, there is a time for all
gs, and that he would have been far better beside her
among his missionary hearers. Something of this she
next day, and a little coolness ensued, in which he wrapped
self up like an aëronaut sailing away in the cold clouds,
kept away from Eaton Square all day.

his was a state of things not to be borne; consequently,
e evening, a footman and a note were despatched, to call

him to reason and her arms. He came, but might als
well have stayed away; he was moody and thoughtful.
day, the last of her girlhood's joy, he was absent nea
whole of it; and, though she had quite enough to occu
still his absence was keenly felt. When he came, i
agitation of manner, all she could obtain from him, in r
to questions a bride should never have been forced to
about the arrangements of the morrow, was—

"Never fear; all will be perfected." And she was
to make eccentricity bear the weight of his conduct.
had made others suffer by her malignant disposition
never could have invented a surer punishment than th
urged on Narcissus to propose to her.

"I cannot understand Narcissus," he said to Mari
would to-morrow were over, for so difficult a man to de
never met before."

In the evening the bridegroom elect came. His ma
more embarrassed than ever—absent, flighty, sad;
endeavouring to gain the upper hand of some overw
annoyance, and yet there was an evident kindness
towards Angelina, to which she had been a stran
time.

When the hour of departure came, her heart
triumph over *her enemies;* for, an enemy to all the w
imagined every heart against herself, and reading the
we are so apt to do, by our own sentiments, to our utte
fiture full often, she conceived her most sympathi
those readiest to triumph over her; consequently, th
little cowed by his recent conduct, rose to all its
gance, and she towered above Mariam and her sol
her pride of heart at having secured a young husb
more Elton tried to plead for poor Richard, in an e
a sisterly letter, in all charity, might summon h
ceremony of the morrow.

"I have before given you my final decision on th
Mr. Elton," she haughtily exclaimed. "That, as th

gyman, I cannot countenance a man bearing the debauched racter of my brother."

There's one comfort, Angelina," he retorted, "that the gyman understands Christian charity better than his wife r will, and is making a proof of it now."

What do you mean, sir?" she angrily exclaimed.

Never mind now; some day I'll tell you all you owe me." he bit her lip; for conviction told her Elton had been a er in her marriage, by urging on Narcissus.

he morning rose clear and frosty, and as the delighted elina stepped into the carriage which was to carry her to George's, where an impatient bridegroom was supposed to waiting her, the air and joy had almost given a colouring er wan cheek. Mariam looked really beautiful as brides- d, happy beyond any one's doubting, which was the only Angelina felt as she ascended the steps leading to the summation of her hopes. A numerous company awaited r arrival; amongst them Mrs. Bruce stood foremost, who, he pressed her *dear* Angelina's hand, whispered audibly,—

Is it not strange Mr. Browne has not yet arrived?"

either did Mr. Browne arrive. It had been arranged that newly married couple should start after the breakfast for a inental tour, returning after the orthodox month to Eaton are, until a residence should be chosen and prepared. He been firm against her desire of taking and furnishing a se before their departure; but he brought in so many argu- ts against it, that she was forced to accede to his wish.

here was, therefore, only one place to send to by the light- d Mercury employed to seek into the cause of the delay, this was, his late residence; thither he went in haste, for hours, which never tarry, were hurrying on towards the one of twelve.

arcissus had told her truly in saying, that another curate engaged to do duty for him during his absence, but he did say how long that absence would be! The affrighted cury (a groomsman) returned. We will not quote his

words—they required frequent repetition to be intelligible: but state facts. The *temporary* curate had been firmly installed at Narcissus's request, in his place, and he—burning with desire for martyrdom, different to the one Angelina intended for him—had started by a night train for Liverpool, and was to sail that day as a missionary for Hong Kong!

Some people pretend to faint—for once Angelina was sincere, she did so outright, and of all her so-called friends, not one felt so sincerely for her as her supposed *enemy*, Mariam.

On the return of the wedding party, it was ascertained that a letter had been brought late the night before for Miss Adair, but that, in the hurry and confusion of preparations, it had been set aside as something of no immediate moment to the bride elect; and this letter contained poor Narcissus's penitent acknowledgment, "that after a hard trial to subdue his rebellious will, he was forced to admit that marriage was not his vocation, and all his inclinations tended to the calling of a missionary. He was starting for Hong Kong; by a strange fatality, the vessel would sail on his wedding-day; and as he had combated his wish for a week's delay in preparations, which would have given him time to act less dishonourably, he was forced to do as he was doing."

He concluded with prayers for Angelina's welfare, and that a better, worthier man than himself might lead her to the altar. The wedding breakfast became, indeed, sad as funeral-baked meats, and hirelings devoured Gunter's best, and wiped their mouths in thanksgiving!

CHAPTER LIII.

ELTON was scarcely astonished. A keen man of the world, e had feared something from Narcissus's manner, though not uite the truth. He was sorely perplexed to find a way to medy the evil; he had hoped so much from Angelina's sence—indeed, all feeling assured that, once alone with Mrs. dair, her heart would call loudly for her son's presence. Now ngelina, doubly embittered, stood between Richard and home. esolved, however, not to lose without an essay to win, Elton, out a week after the event at St. George's, endeavoured to ve the hearts at war for peace; but he was forced to admit, at if sorrow subdues a kindly spirit to charity and love, it rdens an evil one: and Angelina declared, if Richard entered e house, she would quit it, so convinced was she, as she had d every one, that her brother's notoriety had made the pious rcissus adverse to allying himself with the family to which belonged.

"Then there is but one thing to be done!" exclaimed Elton. Mariam and I must marry at once; for I am resolved the y shall have a home, and not be cast on the world for a fault ich circumstances forced upon him. So Mariam, my love, a must hurry on your milliners as quickly as possible; and ill see the men of law about the settlements."

A warm blush lit up her cheek as he spoke; and Angelina nd it doubly disgusting—the love-making of "that idiot on," now that she was a *Colombe delaissée*.

Mrs. Adair felt her name at stake, as a woman of sentiment, the very unsentimental termination of her daughter's gagement; and though she entered with far less energy of l into all the preparations for the marriage, still she lingly consented to its taking place at once. It may readily imagined that Angelina would gladly have absented herself,

but she preferred the many annoyances of hourly occurrenc to the certain *on dits* and pityings of her friends were s away; and a certain fear was over her, that if no longer Eaton Square to play Cerberus, her brother, whom she held detestation, would again be welcomed. There is no hatred equal a good warm, sisterly one.

Mrs. Adair had a sovereign dislike to law, law-paper settlements, and consultations. To oblige her, Elton h arranged and superintended Angelina's; but now, who was read and peep spectacle-on-nose, for fear of error, into Elto own? It was his desire that Mariam's property should be settled on herself, besides certain provisions for young children, &c., from his own; and during a week he manag so completely to worry Mrs. Adair's brain with a complicati of papers, that when he arrived at last to have the settlemen read and signed, she was so thoroughly worn out and disgus with the very sight of the parchments, that she begged him once to skip all preamble and technicalities, and give her heads.

This was a mere form of speech; for she listened to not but the extraneous phrases cast in, like *feu follets*, to d her attention, about the extremely chaste beauty in pa and design of Mariam's carriage, as by himself ordere she listened, and contemplated the joyous hilarity of the she was fain to borrow Angelina's idea, "That Elton ha come perfectly ridiculous and undignified for a man of his years."

After a due perusal of the settlements had taken pl witnesses of her signature were summoned from an adj room, and Mrs. Adair heaved a sigh of satisfaction as beheld Elton fold up the document, saying that the rest be accomplished at the lawyer's, "and once more *paria* free," Mrs. Adair gave up her thoughts to blonde and flowers. Two days elapsed in this agreeable occupation despite all Angelina's anxiety to the contrary, not one even of regret crossed Mariam's happy face.

The former, driven to desperation, even alluded rather coarsely and most unfeelingly to Mariam's love for her brother. Blush she did, but certainly not sigh; and Elton, who was present, putting an arm round her waist, said tenderly,—

"Never mind, my dear; if *I* don't care, who need do so?"

One morning, it was three days after the signing the settlements, Elton entered the room where sate Mrs. Adair and Angelina; Mariam was on his arm; she had been staying two days at her aunt's house. As they entered, instead of advancing as usual after an absence to shake Mrs. Adair's hand, she still clung to Elton's, and certainly she was as pale, though not sad, as Angelina could desire to see her.

Mrs. Adair looked up, amazed at the phantom-like entrance they made, and after a pause of some moments, ejaculated, in default of more fluent speech,—

"Well!"

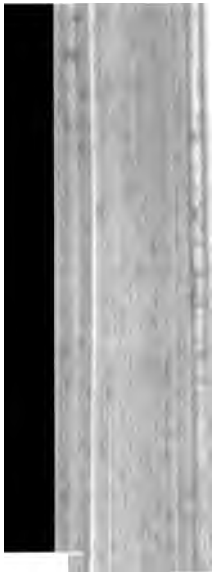
"Well!" he replied, omniously shaking his head, "I trust it may seem so to you, my dear madame; but the fact is, both Mariam and myself, much disliking pomp and ceremony, quietly walked this morning into St. Pancras Church, and have just returned to ask your blessing!"

"Married!" shrieked Mrs. Adair and Angelina in a breath; for to the last the latter was buoyed up with the hope of seeing Mariam falter, and evince a disinclination to this mariage.

"Marriage, my dear madam," he sententiously said, "is indeed a ship at sea; we have many storms to encounter, and seldom are piloted safely into port, if the waves run high. I thought to do so, as you know; and here you see before you a poor wretch, whose vessel was boarded within sight of land, himself cast high and dry on a desert island, whilst a piratical craft, well to the wind, has sailed away with her. I certainly went to the church; but pity me, pray, another married my bride——"

"Gracious Heaven! what do you mean?" exlaimed Mrs. Adair.

Angelina's fears suggested the truth, and though her heart



black face and dazzling teeth grinned in the
"Madam," foamed Angelina, "will you
Miss Lincoln is your ward, under age, and yo
"Stop!" interrupted Elton, smiling; "I ha
blunders of this affair. By some extraordinar
name was substituted for mine in the sett
your mother, Angelina; therefore, I don't
done!"
"*I* shall not remain in the house with th
man!" she exclaimed, livid with rage, as sl
from the room.
A mother's heart, however weak she m
perfectly callous to a child's fate, though, u
is sometimes the case; certain it is, that in t
warmly embraced her son, Mariam, even Mr
the girl's natural guardian, had countenan
and shook hands warmly with Elton, who
he regarded Mariam.
Little more remains to be said—Angelina
others departed. Elton had forgotten nothin
ments; and as Adair seated himself beside
their travelling carriage, Leah all rejoicing in

impress our neighbours with the idea that most of the English are gloomy, splenetic, or rank vagabonds. Mrs. Bruce and her husband became more than ever attached to missionaries, seeing that home acts and deeds were so depraved and shocking, and often over their bohea conversed and conjectured about that elect vase of china—Narcissus Browne.

Elton said, and we trust many will agree with him, that where we are all such frail crockery, we should not fling away a cup of precious workmanship, though a little flawed by contact with the world, lest it fall to the ground and be broken into worthless atoms, but in charity conceal its flaws, show its beauties, and, holding it in our esteem, raise it in the world's. Richard Adair is our living simile of the Sevres vase; and, as he held Mariam to his heart, the repentant man owned that Heaven was more loving than even just, for he had not merited his happiness!

THE END.

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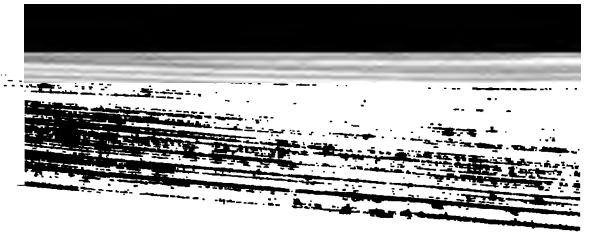

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